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DUVAL AND THE LADY ON HOUNSLOW HEATH

From the painting by W. Frith

(See page 142)

STAND & DELIVER

THE ROMANTIC ADVENTURES OF CERTAIN GENTLEMEN OF THE HIGH TOBY, THEIR TIMES, THEIR ASSOCIATES, FRIENDS AND VICTIMS

BY

ELIZABETH VILLIERS

AUTHOR OF

"LOVE STORIES OF ENGLISH QUEENS,"
"QUEEN ALEXANDRA THE WELL BELOVED," "RIDDLES OF CRIME,"
ETC. ETC.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS
IN HALF-TONE

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TYBURN

O Tyburn ! could'st thou reason and dispute,
Could'st thou but judge as well as execute,
How often would'st thou change the Felon's doom,
And truss some stern Chief Justice in his room.
Then should thy sturdy Posts support the Laws ;
No promise, frown or popular applause,
Should sway the Bench to favour a bad cause ;
Nor scarlet gown, swell'd with poetic fury,
Scare a false verdict from a trembling jury.
Justice, with steady hand and even scales,
Should stand upright as if sustained by Hales ;
Yet show in matters, doubtful to decide,
A little leaning tow'rds the milder side.

DRYDEN.

FOREWORD

STRICTLY speaking the romantic highwayman, beloved in schoolboy fiction, came into being after the Civil War, when many gallant and hitherto perfectly honourable gentlemen, having lost their substance in the cause of the King, considered it no sin to carry on guerilla warfare against the Parliamentarians, using, in their unlawful adventures, the good horses which had borne them at Edgehill or Naseby, and the arms once part of their military equipment.

Before that era the roads had been frequented by robbers without number, but, apart from a few outstanding examples, these were footpads of the debased order. The cavalier who became a well-mounted, well-dressed, well-mannered gentleman thief may be credited with having introduced a new form of crime, one which appealed to the imagination of the many adventurers who took to the road in the same guise long after the Civil Wars were over and

the ruined Cavaliers had given up their outlaw trade.

In defence of the original highwaymen, of whom James Hind is a good example, let it be remembered that many had suffered great wrongs, and all honestly believed they had scriptural authority for "Spoiling the Egyptians," while in very few cases could acts of violence or bloodshed be laid to their charge.

Whatever was in their favour, however, they were followed by robbers of a different calibre. The High Toby became popular amongst ruffians and sneak-thieves for whom little can be said, though here and there were some led by the spirit of adventure, by the reckless courage that is called heroism under other circumstances. Also, in reading the lives of these outlaws, the fact of their youth emerges with painful suggestion of headstrong folly rather than calculated sin. Some very few, Dick Turpin for instance, lived to the 'thirties, Nevison was a Methuselah of highwaymen, since he was forty-six when he was executed, and Philip Stafford was about the same age, but most of those who died on the gallows-tree for such adventurous crime were pitifully young.

Probably it was this youth of theirs which gave them their charm. It flung a halo of

romance over their most ugly actions, it won them friends even amongst those they wronged, and keeps their memories with us as those of gallant soldiers of fortune whose few good deeds are treasured, whose many crimes are judged lightly.

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STAND AND DELIVER

CHAPTER I

DICK TURPIN

IN ROMANCE AND REALITY

Brave lawbreakers in past times have not only believed themselves to be good men and true, but have also had the sympathy of great numbers of their fellow-countrymen.

—*Encyclopædia Britannica.*

YOUNG Mrs. Richard Turpin was beaming with pride in her dashing husband as she served his dinner in the room behind the shop in the High Street at East Ham, a remote and picturesque Essex village. When all was ready he came in to enjoy the meal, a big, swaggering, handsome fellow of eight-and-twenty who considered himself rather above his neighbours and most certainly was so considered by his wife.

She was a London girl who had brought him a nice dowry, while he was the son of a well-to-do farmer in Thackstead, Essex, who had apprenticed him to a butcher in Whitechapel and then enabled him to set up in business for himself there at

East Ham. Also he had a good deal more education than was common in those days. His schoolmaster, Mr. Smith, who ran a school of some standing at Thackstead, had considered young Turpin his most promising pupil and was particularly proud of his excellent handwriting, although for modern taste it seems to have been too much embellished with twists and curls.

But Dick Turpin had the knack of making himself popular everywhere—in school, among his fellow-apprentices at Whitechapel, now with his neighbours at East Ham, and with women everywhere.

Mrs. Turpin, little more than a bride, was sure she had drawn a prize in the matrimonial market, though Dick had a way of spending money freely, far more freely than his business allowed we may imagine. Still, he was holding up his head amongst the best established of the tradespeople near, and even the gentry took notice of him. He was a dead shot, a fearless rider, a sportsman in every sense of the word, except that which suggests sport as standing for honour and honesty.

He and his Hannah sat at table chatting pleasantly, the house-servant and the assistant butchers sharing their meal we may be sure. Equally it is certain that the conversation turned to the excitement which was thrilling the village

and the farms beyond its boundaries just then—from every direction came stories of sheep and cattle vanishing mysteriously in the dead of night from the fields of their owners, leaving no trace.

Now a Mr. Giles, a farmer at Plaistow—a great grazing district because of the richness of the grass on the marshes—had lost two bullocks of special value, bullocks also whose curious markings should have made identification easy.

"Lack-a-day, there must be thieves in the midst of us, or the spirits have carried Farmer Giles's cattle away," was the conclusion at which Mrs. Turpin arrived, and with that her husband agreed—probably the slaughterman said nothing. The possibility of supernatural agencies being at work gripped the women; they were talking excitedly, telling strange stories they had heard from wandering chapmen or from gossips at the fair, when Mrs. Turpin, whose seat commanded a view of the village street, broke off with an exclamation.

"What a-doing be here?" she asked. "Here be the constable with Mr. Giles and a rare crowd following."

Richard Turpin was on his feet. "Go out and see what they want," he told his wife, casually, and while the servants ran pell-mell into the road, Mrs. Turpin remained in the shop to inter-

view the little crowd should they come thither. Turpin was left in the parlour behind the shop.

Surging, the throng of villagers came nearer, the constable supported by Mr. Giles of Plaistow and two of the latter's men—the farmer had been so incensed at the loss of his beasts that he had offered a very handsome reward and, being determined to get that reward, the two men had become what we should call amateur detectives, tracing the missing beasts to the place where they had met their doom.

It was to the slaughter-house attached to Turpin's shop their search took them. There two hides were found and the queer markings put an end to doubt.

"We've found the skins of my bullocks in Turpin's slaughter-house," said Mr. Giles. "Richard Turpin is the thief."

"You are lying," cried Turpin's wife—probably in all earnestness, poor girl. "Come and confront my husband with your vile story, he will prove his innocence."

"Where is your husband?" was the next question, and she stood aside to leave the way clear as she pointed to the door leading to the room behind the shop.

They rushed towards it, but on the inner threshold stood staring. The room was empty,

while the open window told how Turpin had seized the brief respite to leap over the sill and run for safety in the marshlands near.

That was the end of Richard Turpin's career as a respectable tradesman. His shop was closed, his young wife went to live in London with her own people, and in East Ham, as well as in Thackstead village where he had been born, gossips told how Farmer Turpin's son had fallen from grace and was a fugitive from justice.

With the idea of getting out of the country he made for the coast, and on the marshes near Canvey Island fell in with a gang of smugglers, perhaps those who made the grey ruins of Hadleigh Castle their stronghold, and by spreading the rumour it was haunted secured secrecy for their work. Joining forces with them, a smuggler he became, and so successful was the gang while he worked with it, that the Revenue officers bestirred themselves to extraordinary efforts, and in the end the smugglers were forced to flight.

With half a dozen of his friends, Turpin doubled back to Epping Forest, where they stayed for a time, hunting the deer in the green glades under the hornbeams, and selling the poached venison in such markets as were to be had.

The venture proving dangerous and not very

profitable, they decided to become housebreakers —or burglars, as we should say. Apparently their first venture was at a chandler's shop in Watford, kept by an old gentleman named Strype, from whom they took every penny he possessed in the world. Another adventure, the story of which is very well known, was the burglary at Loughton of the house of an old lady who was alone in the place except for her maid. Very spiritedly the lady refused to say where her money was kept, on which Turpin—or one of the others—seated her on the fire till in her agony she gave away the secret. Four hundred pounds was the booty they secured.

From a farmer at Barking they took seven hundred pounds—in those days when banks were in their infancy such robberies were easy—and afterwards the gang robbed the house of the keeper of the forest, a Mr. Mason, who lost a very large sum, though the exact amount is not specified. We are told distinctly, however, that Turpin did not share in this crime, for as soon as he had any money he left the others to join his wife in London.

A few months later (January 11th, 1735) his money had been spent, for with five companions he travelled to Charlton in Kent, where in the darkness of the wintry night they knocked at

the door of a Mr. Saunders, a wealthy farmer, begging for shelter. The door opening hospitably they swaggered to the parlour where the farmer, his wife, and friends were playing cards. Pistols were produced, but the company were told if they offered no resistance no harm would befall them. Mr. Saunders accepted the position, and while three of the robbers kept guard, the rest searched the house with cool deliberation, pocketing a large amount of valuables. Returning to the parlour they opened a bottle of the farmer's brandy, produced some of his mince-pies from the pantry and insisted that all the company should eat and drink with them. Mrs. Saunders was so overcome that she fainted, on which Turpin stopped the feast while water was flung in her face. When she recovered he drank a toast to her better health, and presently rode away with his men, satisfied with his night's work.

They had left a boat waiting on the marshes near Woolwich, and in this they crossed to the northern side of the river, making their way to an empty house of which they took possession in Ratcliff Highway. There they hid the booty till it could be disposed of safely.

From the house of a Mr. Sheldon at Croydon they obtained a large number of jewels, then

changed the scene of their operations to Edgeware in Middlesex, where they robbed a farmer named Lawrence, this crime being distinguished by circumstances of ruffianly brutality, though there is no proof that Turpin took an active part, or indeed knew what was going on.

The robbery made a great stir, especially as the gang were identified as the same that had been busy elsewhere. A reward of fifty guineas was offered for their apprehension and a free pardon to any who should turn King's Evidence.

Undeterred, the six met at the *White Bear*, Drury Lane, on the sixth of the following February, where they planned to rob a Mr. Francis, a farmer living in a very lonely house in Marylebone. In this case they managed to lock Mr. Francis and his menservants in a stable, after which one of the gang kept watch over Mrs. Francis and the maids, while the rest rifled the house. When they rode away they took with them a sum of money, and in addition a silver tankard, a medal of Charles I, a gold watch and several rings.

This property was easily identified, also the reward was increased to one hundred pounds, with the result that one of the gang became traitor. Two were arrested on his evidence and hanged in chains, while the other three, of whom

Turpin was one, escaped, a price upon their heads.

It was then Dick Turpin turned his attention to highway robbery, and became what was euphemistically termed a Knight of the Road, otherwise A Gentleman of the High Toby. Well-mounted and well-armed, he left London, and riding along a lonely road that crossed the Cambridgeshire fens, saw a horseman whom he marked down as his prey. Drawing his horse to a clump of trees by the roadside he waited, watching the approaching stranger closely. He saw a man still young, though of portly figure, his clothes rich with gold lace, his horse one of the best that could be imagined. Most certainly he promised a rich booty, and Turpin was excited accordingly.

At the right moment his spurs touched his horse, it bounded into the road, and with bell-mouthed pistol held at the portly gentleman's heart, Turpin bade him " stand and deliver."

The effect was unexpected. Instead of begging for mercy the stranger went into a roar of laughter, holding his sides as he rocked in the saddle.

" What, dog eat dog ? " he cried between his laughs. " No, no, Brother Turpin, though you may try to rob me I would rather we rode together,"

"You know me," said Turpin in amazement. "Who, then, are you?"

"Tom King, may it please you," retorted the other. "He whom some men call the Gentleman Highwayman."

Whatever doubts Turpin may have felt were allayed, the two outlaws rode away side by side, and so great a liking to each other did they take that they decided to throw their lots together and to rob in partnership.

Turpin, with his swaggering, roystering gallantry, had that strange attraction for women so often possessed by men of his type, yet one story which has come down to us does not show him in a chivalrous light. For some reason he and King had ridden as far north as Bungay in Suffolk, and on market day were watching money changing hands for butter and cheese, for cattle and sheep and corn. Two young women received as much as fourteen pounds for their wares, and finding they had to walk home along a lonely road, Turpin suggested they should be robbed. King retorted it was a shame to take toll from such pretty girls, but Turpin had his way and the fourteen pounds went into his pocket.

Returning towards London the two fell in with a coach-and-four in which a London gentleman named Bradle was riding with his children.

From him they took his watch, his money and a mourning ring in which was enclosed his dead wife's hair.

"Gentlemen, may I not keep that?" he begged, and in broken words added its pathetic history.

Tom King was not called the Gentleman Highwayman for nothing.

"Keep it you shall," he said, and gave the ring back. "It would be a shame to take it."

Finding himself so successful Mr. Bradle made another request.

"I value my watch from its associations also," he said. "It is worth a good six-and-thirty pounds in cash, but far more than that to me because of memories. Will you allow me to buy it back? I will pay you faithfully."

The highwaymen consulted together. "What say you, Dick?" asked King with a curious lack of humour. "This gentleman seems an honest fellow, shall we trust him?"

Turpin retorted it should be as his friend wished, on which King rode up to the coach again.

"If we took this watch to our usual market we should get six guineas for it," he said. "The men who buy from us never give more for any watch, whatever its value. Therefore, since we will not make undue profit from you, sir, you

shall have it returned at once if you will send six guineas honestly to the house called the the Dial in Birchin Lane."

The gentleman gave his promise and kept his word. When the highwaymen called at the inn they found the money waiting.

A reckless, devil-may-care existence these outlaws led, often facing danger from sheer love of defying the law, as a very typical story told of Turpin proves.

Among the most popular places of resort in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was Marylebone Gardens, once the private estate adjoining Marylebone Manor House, but later a place of public amusement celebrated for its bowling greens and for the beauty of the walks beside the Tyburn stream which ran through its groves. It is known to us as Regent's Park. Gambling was one of the attractions, and rogues and vagabonds frequented the place alike on business as on pleasure. Says Macheath in the *Beggar's Opera :* " There will be deep play to-night at Marylebone, and consequently money may be pick'd up upon the road."

To Marylebone Gardens Dick Turpin went, and amongst the crowd noted a lady of remarkable beauty who was " taking the air " with dignity in the midst of the " quality." She was a Mrs.

Fountayne, the wife—or according to another account, the sister-in-law—of Dean Fountayne, a pillar of the Established Church.

Up to this very aristocratic lady, in the midst of her friends, swaggered a well-dressed man, who without ado flung his arms about her and kissed her full on the lips.

The lady screamed, as well she might, and the stranger took off his hat and bowed.

" Don't be alarmed, madam," he said. " Rather boast that you have been kissed by Dick Turpin."

With which he strolled away to be lost amid the crowd before the friends of Mrs. Fountayne had recovered from their stupefaction.

Naturally such recklessness, combined with more violent outrages against law and order, roused the town. The name of Dick Turpin was on everyone's lips, and because of the rewards offered for his capture every thief-taker and constable was on his track. Before long no innkeeper would give him or Tom King shelter—a proof of the hotness of the pursuit, since even most respectable landlords welcomed gentlemen of the High Toby as their guests. In order to keep free and to carry on his trade the highwayman had to have many friends, and at the inns he scattered his guineas with lavish generosity, thus buying confederates everywhere.

In their dilemma Turpin remembered a cave in Epping Forest between King's Oak and Loughton town. At first it was a comparatively small hollow, but the two adventurers enlarged it, hiding its mouth behind a screen of ferns and bramble until its secrecy was complete, and there in the depths of the earth they had a refuge for their horses and themselves.

For a long time this was their stronghold, from which they issued at intervals to replenish their pockets and their larder, but presently the Bow Street Runners discovered they lurked in the forest, and though they did not locate the cave they kept so close a watch the fugitives dared not leave its shelter.

Crouching in its darkness, afraid to move, they were brought face to face with starvation.

In this desperate condition they were saved by Turpin's gallantry. A girl of Loughton had kept many a secret assignation with the highwayman in the secret cave, and guessing his straits determined to take him help although she must have known the risk she ran. The man was an outlaw, all who gave him succour would be considered as bad as he in the eyes of the Justices, and many a girl as young as she, and for crimes against the law no greater than hers, had died upon the gallows-tree. Yet with a romantic

and splendid devotion worthy of a better object, for the sake of the highwayman she dared all, actually managing to creep through the dark forest in dead of night and to reach the cave under the very noses of the watchers, thus conveying food and some comforts to the fugitives huddled within. Thanks to her heroism the two were kept alive until the constables, tired of their vigil, went to seek their quarry elsewhere, quite sure that Turpin must have left the forest. He could not be there and alive, they said, so close had been their cordon.

It is only fair to add that the author of *Remarkable Trials* states that the heroine of this adventure was the legal Mrs. Turpin, saying definitely that all the time her husband made the cave his headquarters she was a frequent visitor, often staying with him for some time. Whoever the woman was she deserves our admiration for her courage, and from what we know of Turpin it is quite probable there were two heroines and that the credit is due both to Mrs. Turpin and to a lady from Loughton, though doubtless each was unaware of the other's existence.

At last, able to creep from their hiding-place, the highwaymen came to the light of day again and, deciding that their best hope of safety lay in

separation, at the cross-roads they shook hands and rode different ways.

Turpin went to the Great North Road and there remained some time, chiefly haunting the highway between Islington and Hornsey, finding refuge between the times in the tangled fastnesses of Highgate Woods, though he did not remain in any neighbourhood long. At unexpected intervals he appeared on all the main roads out of the Metropolis, and in every direction scenes and places claim to be identified with his exploits. There is, however, the strong probability that this or that spot has been the resort of highwaymen time and again, and that as Dick Turpin came to be chosen as the typical robber of the road, his name was given as representing all the other followers of his lawless trade.

A year or so ago saw the demolition of an old wooden house, *The Two Brewers*, at Perry Hill, Catford, to which clung a persistent tradition that he sheltered there often—its sign-post remains by the roadside on the route of the motor buses. Nearer London a causeway of white stones crossing Peckham Rye bore the name of Dick's Ride from the belief the highwayman had galloped over it—probably on his way to visit another noted gentleman known as Brockley Jack. The latter's house, a ramshackle

inn, called by his name, was pulled down within the last twenty-five years and a modern hotel with the same sign stands on the site.

Brockley Jack posed as a respectable innkeeper while carrying on the more lucrative trade as a robber on the wilds of Blackheath. In order to avoid identification he had a complete dummy of himself which he placed, with pipe and glass, in a corner of the inn parlour as though asleep. The alibi was complete, and invariably plenty of witnesses swore Jack had been asleep in his bar at the very moment travellers were giving up their wealth to the robber on the heath. When the house was taken down the housebreakers discovered a perfect rabbit warren of trap-doors and secret passages, many of the rooms having hidden exits through walls, ceilings and floors. If Dick Turpin rested there, he knew of those trap-doors and sliding panels, and probably had occasion to avail himself of them.

The *Spaniard's Inn* on Hampstead Heath still possesses an oak-panelled room in exactly the same condition as when Turpin saw it, while further afield the *Ostrich Inn* of Colnbrook, Bucks, makes much of its connection with the highwayman. Incidentally the claim is made that the *Ostrich Inn* is the oldest house in England still fully licensed. All round Epping and Loughton

are other inns and places that were his acknowledged haunts; indeed, to complete the itinerary of spots connected with his name would be to fill a fair-sized gazetteer.

For a time Turpin did well single-handed, but presently returned to the forest cave, perhaps to keep an assignation with the Loughton lady or to meet his wife. Be his object what it may, to the cave he went, although he ought to have known it was under observation, and hardly had he entered its shadows before two men armed with muskets appeared in the opening, one a higgler (*i.e.* a hawker), the other a keeper of the forest.

Seeing the two Turpin mistook them for poachers, and called out good-humouredly that there were no hares to be caught in there.

"That may be so," returned the forest keeper. "But there is a good Turpin, and he'll be game enough for us."

Turpin was on his feet, quick to sense danger.

"Let me pass—for your own sakes, let me pass," he cried.

"Not us—we've got you fair and square," retorted the other, pointing his blunderbuss at the outlaw's breast.

Turpin gripped the weapon, striving to wrest it from the man. All accounts say that he told the other again and again to let him go, otherwise——

THE OLD BROCKLEY JACK

From an engraving lent by M. H. Choppin, Esq.

This queer old inn was pulled down early in the present century and an hotel of the same name built on the site. The housebreakers found innumerable trapdoors and secret passages (see page 30). The triangular shaped object in the elm on which the sign is painted is the blade-

Tragedy followed. The keeper persisted in his endeavour to make the arrest, and for a time a desperate struggle raged. The highwayman gained possession of the gun, the keeper tried to recover it, till suddenly it exploded, though none can say who pulled the trigger. Turpin remained unharmed, but the keeper fell dying on the sandy floor while the higgler ran screaming from the cave.

Murder had been done, and Turpin rode away knowing he would be hunted doubly now. Hue-and-cry rang through the land, yet, probably from the fact that he had so many friends, he managed to escape arrest. Quite soon after the murder he stopped a coach near Holloway, and one of the gentlemen in the vehicle recognised him.

"Ha, Turpin, you call yourself King of the Road, but your reign will be a short one, I swear," he said, as he handed over watch and chain and fumbled in his pocket for his purse.

Turpin did not attempt to disguise his identity.

"Be that as it may, I'm not afraid of being taken by you," he retorted gaily. "Don't stand hesitating, but be quick and stump up your gold."

Which the gentleman did apparently, but as soon as he reached London he gave information

to the authorities, who thereupon concentrated their efforts upon that northern road where the highwayman had been seen.

Finding matters were too dangerous there Turpin fled to Hertfordshire where he found shelter. Funds running short, and not daring to replenish them in the usual way, he wrote to his wife in London begging her to raise money—there is nothing to tell us how that was to be done, but as he provided for her generously when he was in funds, probably she had resources—and meet him at a certain inn he named, bringing the money with her.

Sure she would not disappoint him, he rode to the inn on the appointed day, and leaving his horse in the yard entered the front door. The landlord told him a lady was waiting in a room to whose door he pointed, and Turpin was hastening towards it when he came face to face with one of the customers in the bar.

The man knew him; worse still, he was one to whom he was in debt.

"Halloa, Dick Turpin," he called, "well met. When will you pay the money you owe me?"

"At once—at once—my wife is yonder, I will get it from her and bring the sum to you," answered Turpin, but the name by which he had been called had been heard by others. Already

they were whispering, and all remembered the reward of a hundred pounds waiting for anyone who should capture him alive or dead.

Leaving his debtor in the passage Turpin ran to the room, took the purse of money his wife had brought, gave her a hurried kiss, and the next moment had the window open and was across the sill as he had been once before. In the stable yard his nag was waiting, he flung himself on to its back, and was away before the men in the bar had begun to decide exactly how they should set about winning that reward.

When evening drew in he found himself in a familiar country. Again he was in Essex, and riding his weary steed towards the *Green Man* inn at Loughton he came face to face with his old friend Tom King—it can hardly be believed the meeting was entirely accidental.

They shook hands warmly, and after a little discussion decided to ride together to a place called the *White House* beside Tyler's Ferry on Hackney Marshes, a very wild and secluded spot.

The *White House* was quite as celebrated in its way as was the *Red House* which stood by the riverside at Battersea. Both were inns frequented by sportsmen out for wild-duck shooting, but the *White House* at least had a bad reputation as the haunt of undesirable characters,

for in addition to the duck shooting it offered a special attraction in its nearness to "Joe Sowter's Cockpit," a popular resort. All kinds of fugitives from justice, as well as the patrons of the cockpit and the shooting parties, flocked to the *White House*, together with respectable workmen from the Temple Mills which was a neighbouring landmark. In the *White House* the outlaws were practically certain to find sanctuary; but unfortunately Turpin's horse could go no further, and though Loughton and Hackney Marshes are not very far apart in these days of quick transit, the difficult roads and the need of being ever ready to fly from pursuit, made a fresh horse essential. The two men paused discussing what should be done, when a middle-aged gentleman, a Mr. Major, well known in the neighbourhood for the quality of his horseflesh, came into sight, and as was usual Mr. Major was very well mounted indeed, riding a bay named White Stockings, who became celebrated as a steeplechaser.[1]

Turpin acted promptly. His pistol was at the gentleman's breast and his order was: "Your horse or your life." Under the circumstances bravery would have been foolhardiness,

[1] The horse's name and celebrity are given only in a late eighteenth century chapbook, not a very reliable source of information.

therefore Mr. Major gave up White Stockings and was left lamenting by the roadside with the exhausted nag, while Turpin and his friend galloped away.

From his own point of view, that successful robbery was the most unfortunate adventure Turpin ever carried out. Mr. Major led the weary horse to the *Green Man*, where he recounted his adventure and asked advice as to how he could recover his horse and get even with the robber.

The landlord of the inn, a man named Bages, sympathised with his customer and, according to one account, it was he who identified the thief as Turpin from the description. In the result bills were posted in hot haste, describing the missing White Stockings, and stating that information concerning it should be sent to the *Green Man*.

It was on a Friday evening that the robbery had taken place, and on the following Monday the driver of a passing coach called out that a horse answering the description on the bill had been left in the stable of the *Red Lion* in Whitechapel. Mr. Bages hastened to London, and in the *Red Lion* stable identified White Stockings. The horse had been left on the Saturday night by a man who certainly was Turpin, and Mr.

Bages sat down to wait until the animal was claimed.

About eleven o'clock on that Monday night a young man appeared, paid what was due to the ostler, and was about to lead the horse away when he was stopped. At first he declared White Stockings was his, that he had bought him honestly; but Turpin had carried off Mr. Major's whip as well, and when the whip in the young man's hand came to be examined the name of Major was stamped upon it. On that the lad was given into custody, but with the free-and-easy way men took the law into their own hands two hundred years ago, he was told that if he would betray his accomplices he would be allowed to go free.

He closed with the bargain readily, declaring he was a poor stranger who had been hired by " a stout man in a dufil coat " to fetch the horse, and that the stranger was waiting in Red Lion Street, a stone's-throw from the inn. The lad's account of himself may be true, we will hope it is: the story has a more pleasant ring than if he were Tom King's brother, as another version declares. Be he who he may, he was allowed to escape, and passes from the narrative while Mr. Bages and the constable went to meet the man in the dufil coat who was waiting for White Stockings.

That man was Tom King. The highwaymen had decided to change mounts, perhaps because White Stockings was a better weight-carrier than the other horse, and certainly Tom King was the heavier man. Turpin was in the saddle a little distance away, while King waited for the horse.

The crowd closed around him; before he realized what was afoot he was a prisoner, his hands fast behind his back. Struggling he called to his friend :

" Shoot, Dick, shoot, or we are both taken."

Intent on the rescue Turpin galloped to the heart of the seething crowd that held the captive. For the most part they scattered before the flying hoofs, but Mr. Bages held on to his prisoner and the constable kept by his side. It was at them Turpin fired, but aim, impossible in the turmoil, was made the more difficult by the darkness.

The pistol barked, its load of flying shot reached a mark, but Mr. Bages and the constable were unhurt.

Into the breast of Tom King that shot had gone. He lay dying in his captors' arms.

" Dick, you have killed me," he cried in his anguish, as Turpin clapped spurs to his horse and dashed away.

Tom King lingered a week, though there was

never any hope from the first, and it is unpleasant to have to record that as he lay dying he told those who watched by his bed about the house on Hackney Marshes and the possibility of Turpin being found there. As "The Gentleman Highwayman" it would have been more fitting had he gone to his death loyal to his friend, but perhaps the betrayal was unintentional. It may have been he muttered in delirium, and that the watchers put two and two together.

Turpin had sought shelter in the *White House* directly after firing the fatal shot, and there he told the people what had happened, lamenting the loss of his friend very bitterly. With the coming of daylight he left the place, however, and was well away before the constables arrived.

In the weeks that followed he led a hunted life, saving himself by the extraordinary cleverness of his disguises, now appearing as a miller, white with flour, again as a sweep, often as a carter, sometimes as a road mender beside his heap of stones.

Presently came rumours that he was back in the glades of Epping, on which a huntsman called out his hounds in the effort to hunt him down. Once they were hot on his track, but the trail was lost—afterwards the story went

he had climbed an oak and, hiding in its leafy branches, looked out to see hounds and hunters rush by.

To describe the position in eloquent slang, the neighbourhood was "too hot to hold him," so with infinite difficulty he shook the dust of his native county from his feet, making his way northward—not in the romantic fashion described by Harrison Ainsworth in his novel *Rookwood*, where Turpin and Black Bess figure. Indeed, Black Bess seems to have been created entirely by the novelist whose story inspired Eliza Cook, then in the height of popularity, to write a poem in honour of the gallant mare. That poem set the seal of reality upon the myth in the eyes of the man in the street, and henceforward the story was accepted as it stood. Of course Dick Turpin rode to York on Black Bess the man in the street maintained; Harrison Ainsworth had said so, Eliza Cook had echoed the statement, therefore there was no possible room for doubt. As a matter of fact it was on foot for the most part, and on a succession of stolen horses for the rest, that Turpin travelled as far as Long Sutton in Lincolnshire, where he thought it safe to stay, or perhaps preferred to take whatever risk there might be in lingering because a woman's eyes had laughed at him. Who that

woman may have been is not recorded. Tradition says that she was married, but most certainly Richard Turpin became her lover, and it may be said she was the one who counted most of all the many women who had played their part in his life. Because of her he decided to remain at Long Sutton and there settled down, introducing himself as a horse dealer. He was an excellent judge of cattle, and his opinions were accepted with deference in the various markets. For a time all went well, then amongst the animals he had for sale was a mare recognised as having been stolen. Proof was brought to the constable, who thereupon decided to take him before a magistrate and ask him to explain matters as best he could. Turpin declared himself quite willing to answer any questions, and those who stood by were so assured of his innocence, their sympathies were all with him as he went off with the constable, the latter leading the mare. Before they reached the magistrate's house, however, matters changed. Turpin had knocked the constable down and, mounting the mare, rode off on his travels again.

This time he went to Welton in Yorkshire, where he took a large house and introduced himself as John Palmer—Palmer had been his wife's maiden name—a "gentleman of fortune,"

which suggests he had a considerable sum of money in his possession.

In Welton he made friends as usual, sent for his wife who joined him, and they posed to their world as a highly respectable couple. Certainly "Mr. John Palmer" was absent from home frequently, but it was understood he travelled to various markets in search of suitable horses to sell again. As a matter of fact he visited the lady in Long Sutton frequently, and combined business with pleasure by stealing Lincolnshire horses at the same time.

Hunting and shooting—he was a dead shot according to the ideas of the time and an intrepid horseman—were his chief amusements at Welton. His skill in these as well as his rollicking songs and collection of choice stories made him popular amongst the farmers and surrounding gentry, and he was doing very well indeed when he had a foolish quarrel with a farmer named Hall, who accused him of shooting game cocks belonging to a local inn.

The suggestion was not so unsportsmanlike as it would seem to-day, since with the guns of that time shooting anything but sitting game was out of the question. The author of *Tom Jones*, writing a quarter of a century later, emarks as a breathless marvel almost too

wonderful for belief, his hero was so keen of sight and ready of hand that on one occasion he had been able to bring down a bird on the wing.

As the result of the poultry shooting charge—there is no suggestion that the birds were killed from any motive but wanton mischief—Turpin was taken before the Beverley magistrates and ordered to find sureties for his good behaviour in the future. Those sureties were not forthcoming. Everyone in the neighbourhood liked "Mr. Palmer," everyone had praise for him as "a jolly good fellow," but when it came to being responsible for his conduct, it struck these boon companions that they knew very little of him. Also there were vague rumours afloat——

He had been nearly two years in Welton, and in answer to the magistrates declared that before coming there he had lived in Long Sutton where he had carried on trade as a butcher, but having sold mutton that was unfit for food had had to get away from the place. That confession contradicted his story of being a gentleman of fortune, and enquiries made at Long Sutton proved no John Palmer had been in business as a butcher there. While these investigations were going on, he was committed to York Castle, then, and now, the county goal, and presently people from Lincolnshire visiting York identi-

fied a mare and foal in "Mr. Palmer's" stables as having been stolen from a Long Sutton farmer a few weeks before.

That strengthened the case against him, and as John Palmer he was committed for trial on the charge of horse stealing.

Knowing his position was desperate, he wrote to his brother who was living at or near the old home in Thackstead; it would appear he had kept up correspondence with his family, otherwise further explanation would have been necessary. His letter was quite short.[1]

"York,

"*February 6th*, 1739.

"Dear Brother,

"I am sorry to inform you that I am now under confinement in York Castle for horse stealing. If I could procure an evidence from London to give me a character, that would go a long way towards my being acquitted. I had not been long in this part of the country before my apprehension, so it would pass off the readier. For heaven's sake, dear brother, do not neglect me, you well know what I mean when I say I am yours,

"'John Palmer.'"

[1] The text of the letter given here is that which appears in *Remarkable Trials*.

Unfortunately for Turpin, it was impossible for him to prepay the postage of that letter. Mail coaches had not been established, and the postboys, who carried the letters along the main roads to various stopping places where the packets were sorted and given to other messengers, each required separate payment. Turpin had given a handsome fee to the York post, but when the Essex postboy clattered up to the farm door another sum was demanded, probably three or four shillings. The master was out, the people at home could not or would not pay, and the letter was taken to the post office at Thackstead to await being claimed.

Into that post office strolled Mr. Smith the schoolmaster, from whom young Dick Turpin had learnt his early lessons, and Mr. Smith, seeing that unclaimed letter, was quick to recognise the writing.

"I know the sender of that," he said. "No one but Dick Turpin ever wrote that flourishing hand."

The letter was carried to a magistrate by whom it was opened, and a little later Mr. Smith was dispatched to Yorkshire to see if he could identify "John Palmer." He did so without hesitation, and when Turpin was brought to trial the old man was one of the chief witnesses against him.

Directly the news spread that the famous highwayman was laid by the heels, crowds flocked to see him from all parts of the country, and he held royal receptions day after day.

Amongst his many visitors was a young man who boasted he and the highwayman had met often. Having looked the prisoner full in the face he turned to the gaoler.

" I'll bet you half a guinea you have the wrong man," he said. " That is not Turpin."

Turpin buttonholed the gaoler. " Lay him the wager and I'll go halves," he whispered, which shows he knew it was hopeless to deny his identity.

In due course he was brought to trial. The evidence was overwhelming, yet apparently the Crown felt there was some weakness in their case, though it is difficult to see how that could be, so included an indictment for the murder of Tom King, an act that most certainly was an accident, whilst of his robberies, all capital offences as the law stood, there was no doubt.

Sentence of death was pronounced and Turpin was told he need have no hope of a reprieve. This he realised, although he wrote to his father begging him to intercede with gentlemen of high rank to get the sentence changed to one of transportation. We are told Mr. Turpin senior

did his best, but no one would help so notorious a malefactor.

Whatever those of "high rank" may have thought, Dick Turpin was the people's hero and, while he lay under sentence of death, crowds surged the narrow streets about York Castle, shouting and cheering him. The way in which he met his doom strengthened his hold on popular imagination, for at least he was no coward. He ordered "a new fustian frock" (*i.e.* coat) and a pair of pumps that he might make a brave appearance on the scaffold, and gave five shillings each to five poor men with instructions to follow him as mourners. Also he paid for hatbands and gloves for various friends, and sent his signet ring as a pledge of love to the lady at Long Sutton.

The day of his execution (April 19th, 1739) came, and from York Castle he rode to his death in a cart with another highwayman as his companion—the latter spent his time in earnest prayer and formed a most edifying spectacle, we are told, but Turpin stood bowing gallantly to the cheering crowds, and after the lumbering cart walked the five poor men as official mourners.

Arrived at the scaffold he ascended the ladder unaided, but stumbling slightly with his right

leg, he stamped upon it violently to show that he was not trembling.

" For nearly half an hour he kept the hangman in pleasant conversation," the rope round his neck, and in the end he sprang from the ladder of his own accord.

So he died in his thirty-fifth year, and *Remarkable Trials* adds: ". . . the spectators of the execution seemed to be much affected by the fate of this man who was distinguished by the comeliness of his appearance."

Later in the day the body was carried to the *Blue Boar* in Castle Gate to lie in state till the next morning, then was taken to the churchyard of St. George's where the grave had been dug deep—the constant terror of most people in those days was the fear of the resurrection men who opened graves and carried bodies away for dissection. The five poor men who had acted as mourners were told off to watch that deep grave as a double security, but they slept or were bribed, for in the morning the grave was open and the coffin gone.

The people of York were furious. They searched the house of every surgeon in the city, and presently discovered the dead highwayman in a garden belonging to one of these medical gentlemen. Whereupon they carried Dick Turpin

in triumphal procession back to his grave, and this time kept so good a watch he was undisturbed.

. . . . .

In his letters Charles Kirkpatrick Sharp tells that at the end of the eighteenth century he was visiting the family of Lord de Spencer, and was taken by his host to call at the house of Mrs. Piercy, a lady of considerable wealth and the highest respectability, but known to be the niece of Dick Turpin and locally said to bear a strong resemblance to him—Mr. Sharp adds she was a remarkably handsome woman. Later, he met her at a county ball where she appeared "splendidly attired" and wearing a heavy gold watch with many massive seals of which she was proud. Gossip declared it was a legacy from her uncle, though he must have died before she was born, or at least when she was a very little child.

CHAPTER II

SWIFT NICK NEVISON

THE MAN WHO RODE TO YORK

". . . the remarkable Mr. Nevison who was a person of quick understanding, tall in stature, every way proportionate, exceedingly valiant, having also the air and carriage of a gentleman."—*Tract published in York shortly after Nevison's death.*

SMARTING with a sense of bitter injustice, young John William Nevison clenched his fists and made up his mind to show his parents that he did not care. An only child who had been indulged to an extent not common in the seventeenth century when "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was the maxim most frequently quoted in connection with the bringing up of the young, he had been accused by his mother of the theft of a silver spoon.

Fiercely he had told her he was innocent—as there seems every reason to believe he was—but as is the case with so many foolishly indulgent mothers, Mrs. Nevison was capable of great severity at times, and hysterically ran to the lad's father, insisting he should beat John William for the lie as well as for the theft.

Mr. Nevison was a weak if kindly man. He agreed his son ought to be punished but shrank from inflicting the blows, therefore he wrote to the master at the school the boy attended, requesting he should act as his deputy.[1]

This the master did. John William was cruelly thrashed in the sight of his schoolfellows and then sent home, smarting with the sense of injustice that was more than the physical pain and because the punishment had not been deemed sufficient, banished by his parents to his room under the roof.

There he raged against the injustice of the world, there he came to his determination to ride forth on life's great adventure and leave his home for ever.

So far he knew no town except Pontefract, his birthplace. The year was 1652, and from his window he could see the ruined walls of the castle which had fallen to Cromwell's men three years before and been dismantled. The lad had lived most of the fourteen years of his life with the din of civil war in his ears, and though his father does not seem to have fought for the king, his

[1] The *Dictionary of National Biography* suggests Nevison was a petty thief in childhood, stealing "apples and poultry," but Johnson tells us the lad remained at school till he was thirteen, "during which period his blooming talents promised a luxuriant harvest."

sympathies had been with the Royalist cause, and young John William's first romantic idea in leaving home was to enlist in the Royalist army.

That night he waited till his parents were asleep and all within the house was still. Then in stockinged feet he crept downstairs to the hall where a saddle and bridle hung, helped himself to these, tip-toed to the door, undid its bolts in silence and so was in the quiet streets of the old town. Having put on his boots he flung the harness over his shoulder and ran through the shadows to a field at the back of the schoolhouse where the schoolmaster's horse was grazing. On this he put the saddle and bridle, mounted, and was off to seek his fortune.

Of course he turned the horse's head towards London, since London was the Mecca of all adventurous spirits, and the legend that its streets were paved with gold was accepted as a fact in many distant towns.

Before he had ridden far, however, his boyhood was left behind and he looked ahead with fresh knowledge. He had learnt there was no hope of his gaining glory in military service—the Civil War was over—Charles was a fugitive beyond the sea, and under the iron rule of Cromwell the country was settling to a period of prosperity.

By the time the lad had realised this, his future presented a difficult problem. The money he had brought from home had gone, and when he drew rein on the ridge of northern hills where Dick Whittington's milestone marked the way, to see the forest of London's steeples in the valley beneath, clustered about the beautiful fabric of old St. Paul's, he was face to face with the certainty it would be impossible for him and the schoolmaster's horse to remain together.

He led the horse into a thicket and there—it died.

" About a mile or two from the capital he cut the throat of the poor horse, for fear of being detected," is Captain Johnson's description, but Johnson makes a point of never crediting his heroes with any decent impulse, and the " for fear of being detected " is sheer rubbish. He could have sold the horse, or have turned it adrift easily enough, but he cut its throat. Surely the only reasonable explanation must be that he wanted to make sure the animal did not fall into cruel hands, and men were very cruel to horses in those old days we call " good." In killing the animal he took a considerable risk, for the discovery of its body would lead to local comments and enquiries might have been set on foot in consequence. As a matter of fact

nothing seems to have happened, the horse remained dead in the thicket, no one troubled about the strange occurrence and John William Nevison went on his way to London, facing the world with boyish wondering eyes.

Carrying his small possessions in a bundle he reached the Metropolis and set about searching for work. He was a good-looking boy with an exceptionally winning manner, and in the seventeenth century education was sufficiently rare to have a monetary value. He heard of a brewer who needed what we should call a junior clerk, and offering his services they were accepted at once.

All through his life he had periods of exemplary honesty, and one followed the escapade which had brought him to London. He made good in his clerkship, staying in the situation four or five years, during which time he wrote home to his parents and received their forgiveness. Then came fresh trouble. His work was supervised by an elderly clerk who had no liking for his assistant, blaming him for faults of which he was not guilty. History was repeating itself, and Will Nevison, the lad of seventeen or eighteen, was not less impulsive than the schoolboy had been. He vowed the clerk should pay dearly for his injustice.

The opportunity for which he waited came before long.

Among the duties the head clerk performed was that of debt collecting. On certain days it was his duty to visit the many inns supplied by the brewery to receive the money owing, and in this work he was accompanied by a stalwart servant as protection against possible attacks by footpads. The two had carried out their business without accident so far, though it must have been more by luck than judgment, since at every inn the landlord toasted them in good ale, with the result when they returned to the brewery they had hard work to carry the bag between them and to hold each other up.

On this particular occasion they reached the counting-house in safety, only to collapse on the ground, dead asleep.

Nevison saw his chance and took it. He caught up the bag and coolly walked away with it, leaving the clerk and the servant to sleep off their potations and come to a most unpleasant awakening.

Captain Johnson does not give the name of the brewer who was robbed thus, but he lived in Southwark, so there is every probability he was head of the firm afterwards controlled by that Mr. Thrale who came into prominence as the

Photogravure *Mansell*

SOLDIERS GAMBLING

By Meissonier, now in the Wallace Collection

A scene typical of life in that Army of Flanders with which Nevison served. (See page 59)

husband of a " literary " wife. If so the brewery is carried on still, though we know it as that of Barclay & Perkins.

Nevison ran over old London Bridge with the stolen gold hidden under his coat, and once the bridge was crossed made his way to a river-side public-house frequented by seamen. There he counted the money and found it reached the respectable sum of nearly two hundred pounds, most of which he stowed in a belt around his body—the weight must have been considerable.

At the inn he made friends with a skipper whose ship was bound for Antwerp—England and Holland were at peace after long war, and as Cromwell was doing his utmost to foster trade, many ships were bound thus. Better still for Nevison's purpose, the skipper was not inquisitive, and as the tide was on the turn they went aboard at once. An hour later the little craft was dropping down the river, and a new chapter in the life of John William Nevison had begun.

Antwerp reached, the young fellow sprang ashore, and as he was shaking hands with the skipper on the quay there passed a demure damsel clad in finest silks and accompanied by a sedate chaperone. The chaperone looked the other way, while the demure damsel gave the Englishman a glance we should describe as the

" glad eye "—the demure damsel quite correctly might be described as a hussy.

The challenge he was ready to take up, though the love affair was conducted with difficulty, since we have no evidence he was a linguist, and it is unlikely she had any language save her own. Nevertheless, such good progress did he make that before the end of a week the lady had promised to elope and to bring with her a very considerable fortune in jewels.

He bought a good horse and at the appointed time was waiting for his lady-love. She came, bag of jewels and all. Gallantly he swung her on his saddle and was off.

The start of a most romantic elopement was made, but the ending was not in accordance with the canons of romance, The girl's father, accompanied by a party of friends, set out in pursuit, and if Nevison's horse was good theirs were better, apart from the fact his was carrying a more than double burden.

The fugitives were overtaken, and though the adventurer made a gallant fight he was taken prisoner and the lady borne away to suitable punishment by her indignant father.

Again Nevison's lack of knowledge of the language was a handicap; yet so full of resource was he that he managed to wrest the bars from

his cell and make his escape one foggy night while his gaoler was engaged elsewhere—I think the rest of the money belonging to the London brewer had changed hands just before.

In a strange country, with danger dogging every step, Nevison fled through the fog. Almost all the night had passed; he was in the midst of a desolate waste, when out of the darkness a shadowy form sprang to bar his way and in unmistakable English a hoarse voice called:

"Halt—who goes there?"

Nevison was astonished by the hail, but the sentry nearly dropped his musket in amazement, when is challenge was answered in English as good as his own.

Explanations followed, and the fugitive learned he had penetrated well into Flanders, then, as ever, the cockpit of Europe. Until a comparatively short time before the Netherlands (*i.e.* what we call Holland and Belgium) had been in the possession of Spain; now Holland was freed Flanders was fighting to the same end. Cromwell had dispatched an English army to help the Flemings, but as the Spaniards had supported the Stuart cause, the Duke of York—after James II of England and VII of Scotland—had joined the Spanish flag and to him had flocked a band of English volunteers, mostly

gentlemen exiles for the sake of their king. With them had come a sprinkling of adventurers, who cared not on which side they fought so long as fighting offered a chance of plunder.

In that army Nevison enlisted, to prove a most excellent soldier, quickly winning a commission on the field.

A terrible and tragic campaign was fought under the walls of Ypres—Bruges—Neuport—Brussels—Dunkirk—Ostend, and many a town on the banks of the Lys, a campaign the more terrible because in frequent instances, notably in the siege of Dunkirk, British troops under the generals of Cromwell faced British troops led by the Duke of York.

The struggle ended in the defeat of the Spanish, when the Duke of York's guerilla forces were disbanded and Nevison returned to England with his commission and his character as a gallant soldier, also with a considerable amount of money, the source of which it is better not to enquire. Let it be remembered, however, that looting was the acknowledged part of every campaign in the seventeenth century, therefore if he filled his pockets with plunder from sacked towns or ruined chateaux, he was following the custom of the times.

Landing in England he rode to Pontefract to

present himself before his father, by whom he was received with joyful affection. His mother had died, but the schoolmaster joined in the celebration and metaphorically killed the fatted calf in honour of the prodigal's return. The schoolmaster, as well as Mr. Nevison senior and their friends, had loyalist tendencies, and the gallant record with which John William had returned from the army of the Royalist allies in Flanders won him ample forgiveness for his boyish folly. Of the sins of his manhood these good folks were ignorant.

There followed a period of quiet home life in contrast to the adventures that had gone before. Apparently it was at this time that Nevison married, and the people of Pontefract were sure he was a credit to their town. Johnson, who is by no means prejudiced in his favour, says distinctly that "he remained with his father till the day of his (the father's) death, living as soberly and honestly as if no act of violence had ever stained his hands."

The death of Mr. Nevison senior flung John William on his own resources again. The exact details of the position have not come down to us, but it is easy to see that Mr. Nevison died a poor man, and when he had gone John William was very much at a loose end. Also he had responsi-

bilities and expenses: money must be found, and he decided to obtain it in the easiest way to his hand.

He determined to "take to the road," but had inherited an amount of shrewd business instinct, since he decided to make robbery a business instead of an adventure, working warily by a regular rule. Yet always he was a likeable scoundrel, and even Captain Johnson tells: us "In all his exploits he was tender to the fair sex and bountiful to the poor. He was also a true loyalist and never made any contributions upon that party."

As a highwayman he became known as Nick Nevison, though why the name was bestowed upon him is not exactly clear; perhaps he adopted it as an *alias*, or it may have been bestowed as a left-handed compliment, suggesting he was a relation of "Old Nick."

He gathered around him a band of kindred spirits, of whom two have come down to fame as his seconds-in-command, one a Thomas Tankard of Lincolnshire, and the other a good-looking young fellow named Edward Bracey who was a relation of Nevison's.

These three established their headquarters at an old house by the Trent side at Farndon, not far from Newark, where they installed a gipsy

woman named Elizabeth Burton to act as their housekeeper, all the while Nevison keeping his home in York, whither he had removed from Pontefract, and being known there as a respectable citizen.

In the old house at Farndon their booty was stored until such time as it could be disposed of conveniently, though when on their robbing expeditions the adventurers lived for the most part at the *Talbot Inn* in Newark, quarters there being more comfortable than in the old house by the riverside. In addition they had regular centres which formed ready hiding-places, for at Lincoln and Nottingham as well as in York, where Nevison had his home, were houses where accomplices waited to hide them from the law.

So well organised did the gang become that they drew regular allowances from the drovers and farmers who used the North Road, the money so paid ensuring the dealers should be free from highway robbery. It is to Nevison's credit that he kept this queer bargain honourably —all who subscribed to his road fund were free to travel without fear, no matter what valuables they might carry. They had paid their toll, therefore the highwayman and his gang did not rob them and took care they were robbed by no others; indeed he "policed" the Great North

Road uncommonly well, and saw to it that no lawbreaking was done by any save himself and his men.

By the time all this was settled there had been another member sworn in at the old house by the Trent side—a young adventurer called John Phillips, whose story is told later in another chapter.

Head of the gang, as Robin Hood had led his merry men in Sherwood Forest centuries before, often Nevison worked single-handed, if the stories we are told by Johnson are true. For instance, there is that of his meeting with the moneylender which deserves to be repeated :

" He, one day, fortunately encountered a rich usurer, stopped his coach and demanded that he would deliver the money which he had extorted from poor widows and orphans. The pistol presented to the usurer's breast and the reproaches of William filled his guilty mind with inexpressible terror, and he began to expostulate for his life.

" ' That shall be granted,' said Nevison, ' upon condition of your surrendering your gold.'

" He reluctantly drew out sixty pieces of gold, but this sum being inadequate for the necessities of William, he constrained the usurer to mount upon the postillion's horse, and allowed the

coach with the three ladies in it to proceed." (Apparently they drove away, glad to save themselves, and gave little thought to the usurer whose peril was great.—E.V.)

" The poor usurer, now thinking that the hour was at hand when he would be bereft of his life and separated from his treasures, experienced all the violent emotions of terror, chagrin, and despair.

" William compelled him to draw a note on sight for five hundred pounds on a scrivener in London. He then permitted him to ride after his friends while he himself rode all that night that he might have the money drawn before advice could be sent to prevent it."

Naturally before very long the activities of the gang drew the attention of the authorities upon them. The farmers and drovers were complacent, but the highwaymen robbed rich travellers as well, and these were not forgiving. In London so great a stir was made that officers were specially dispatched to hunt down Nevison and his men. By them the house beside the Trent was discovered, and being arrested Elizabeth Burton turned King's Evidence. She told all she had learnt from the gang, and as this was considerable she was able to divulge the whereabouts of most of their hiding-places, with

the result that all became impossible as places of refuge. Nothing could be done but to separate. Of Tom Tankard's fate no record remains, while Edward Bracey and John Phillips had left their fellow-robbers already. The others scattered right and left, alone John William Nevison rode southward and reached Leicester in safety; but while there, resting at an inn, he was recognised, arrested, and taken in irons to Leicester Gaol.

In Leicester he had many friends, as he had friends all along the Great North Road, and these came to visit him in his cell, among them one who lived a double life, since he was a well-known physician whose honesty was not doubted. After entering the cell there was a pause, then these friends crept shiveringly away, and as they went they whispered the dreaded words, "gaol fever." The physician remained within the sombre walls, but only to seek the gaoler.

"Your prisoner has the plague," he said. "Unless you remove him to a larger and more airy cell and take off his irons he has no chance of life. I give you my word he will never stand his trial."

The gaoler was terrified. "Plague" and "gaol fever" were familiar words that spread panic wherever they were uttered. The prisoner was freed from irons and given better quarters,

but the gaoler, at his wife's earnest entreaty, refused to enter the place. He looked through the wicket in the door and saw Nevison lying on the bench, his face covered with the tell-tale spots.

The physician returned and won warmest praise for his devotion in daring to minister to the sick man. But it was in vain. The gaoler, watching from afar, saw Nevison drink a draught given by the doctor, after which he sank back on his poor bed unconscious.

The doctor bent over him, feeling his pulse, then drew himself erect and came to the door.

" It is as I thought," he said. " Your prisoner has died. For the sake of the living, the burial must be hurried."

The gaoler agreed, but pointed out an inquest must be held. This was done, yet so afraid were coroner and jury that none entered the cell, only giving cursory peeps at the motionless form from the doorway. They heard what the doctor had to say, were satisfied as to the cause of death, returned a verdict accordingly, and the coroner issued a warrant allowing the friends of the dead man to remove his body to give it burial at once.

Back to the prison did those devoted friends come, carrying a coffin into which the " body " was lifted, and the lid screwed down—no officials

approached near enough to see that several air-holes had been bored in the wood. Shoulder high, men following bareheaded, John William Nevison was carried out of Leicester Gaol to the relief of all within it.

To an inn at some distance from the town the cortège went, and there in an upper room the lid was removed, Nevison lifted out and tucked between the sheets of a comfortable bed to sleep off the effects of the draught the doctor had given him, and on his awakening to wash away the unpleasant paint with which his face had been covered and go back to York, thinking his lair there was safest after all. Soon his name was being whispered throughout Yorkshire as that of one whose ghost haunted the ways familiar to him in life. In Leicester Gaol he had died, men said, yet he was seen riding along the high roads. That the figure which thundered by at a gallop was the highwayman's ghost was easy for frightened yokels to believe, but rich farmers, stopped on their way from market and relieved of their wallets, or wealthy travellers who heard the "stand and deliver" command, were convinced Nevison was in the flesh. The keeper of Leicester Gaol—the Governor of the prison as we should say—made a shrewd guess at the truth, and was so angry at having been duped that out

of his own pocket he offered a reward of twenty pounds for the capture of the highwayman.

A woman betrayed Nevison—probably Elizabeth Burton, who was in prison still. Thanks to her the hiding-place near York was raided and the highwayman found. In March, 1676, he was brought to trial at York Assizes on the charges of highway robbery and horse stealing and sentenced to death, but was offered his life on condition he would betray his confederates, notably Edward Tracey and John Phillips.

Exactly how he juggled the words we are not told, but he led the authorities to believe he intended to give the information, until the orders for his execution were definitely countermanded. Then he coolly turned round and to all questions retorted that not a word against his comrades should pass his lips.

To that resolution he adhered, though he remained a prisoner in York Castle for several years, and in the seventeenth century imprisonment was a form of slow torture which entailed suffering infinitely beyond any misery our modern penal system can embrace.

> " . . . The prisons of the kingdom were a disgrace to humanity. They were poisonous, pestiferous dens, densely overcrowded, dark,

dirty, not only ill-ventilated but deprived of fresh air altogether. The wretched inmates were thrown into subterranean dungeons, into wet and noisome caverns and hideous holes, to rot and fester, a prey to foul disease bred and propagated in the prison-house, and deprived of the most common necessaries of life. For food they were dependent on the caprice of their jailers and the charity of the benevolent. Water was denied them except in the scantiest proportions. They were half naked or in rags; their only bedding was straw reeking with exhalations and accumulated filth. Everyone in durance, whether tried or untried, was heavily ironed; women did not escape the infliction. All alike were subject to the rapacity of their jailers and the extortions of their fellows. Jail fees were levied ruthlessly, 'garnish' also, the tax or contribution paid by each individual to the common fund to be spent by the whole body, generally in drink. Drunkenness was universal and quite unchecked; gambling of all kinds was practised; vice and obscenity were everywhere in the ascendant. Idleness, drunkenness, vicious intercourse, sickness, starvation, squalor, cruelty, chains, awful oppression and everywhere culpable neglect. . . ."

Thus a writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* sums up the results of Howard's investigations of our prisons in the late eighteenth century.

Amid such surroundings Nevison remained rather than buy his freedom at the cost of his friends, until at long last he was given another chance, not of freedom, but of change of suffering. A regiment was being raised for service in Tangiers where the conditions awaiting our men were little, if any, better than those in prison. As might have been expected the regular army were not anxious to serve, on which General Graham, who was to command the expedition, suggested to the King that the ranks should be thrown open to certain convicted felons who were to be forced to enlist whether they wanted to or not.

Nevison was one of those chosen. Still wearing his chains he was taken from York Castle, brought south and with hundreds of other outlaws was carried to Tilbury where the troop-ship waited. What happened there we are not told, but imagination fills the gap. His irons being removed as the ship made her way down-stream on the night tide, the highwayman managed to spring overboard and swim to the shore.

Somehow he found means of getting money

and clothes, for when he was heard of next he was well-dressed and was mounted upon a mare whose speed and endurance were to become historic; of all horses ever foaled probably she was the most wonderful, for while so much is mythical concerning Black Bess this part is beyond contradiction.

Not at once did he start his return to York; for many months he remained in the south, robbing right and left, and it is at this part of his career that confusion between him and Dick Turpin begins, although Nevison died twenty years before Turpin was born. In Kent there is still a "Dick's Hill" on which, until recent years, stood an inn with the queer sign, *Fanny on the Hill*, in honour of a girl named Fanny who used to stand at the inn door to watch for the highwayman riding by that she might wave her hand to him and receive his salutation in return.

That story is told in connection with the adventures of Dick Turpin, but the place was marked as "Nick's Hill" on older maps, and the original tradition says the girl of the inn loved Nick Nevison.

Again, there are the caves at Wickham and Chislehurst and Blackheath which were identified definitely as the hiding-places of Nick long before Dick Turpin took to the road, though

tradition calls them Turpin's caves now, and the confusion has persisted in countless other particulars.

Above all else stands out the romantic story of the mare who carried her rider to York, saving his neck at the risk of her own life, and that adventure which has been credited to Turpin by romancists belongs to Nevison beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The story of the ride is mentioned first by Daniel Defoe in his *Tour Through Great Britain*, which dispels the Turpin tradition once and for ever, since the book was published before he was born. Macaulay's history gives the true story of Nevison's ride, but the Victorian novelist Harrison Ainsworth invented Black Bess in his novel of *Rookwood*, making Turpin the hero of the ride. So quickly did the fiction spread, and so strong a hold did it take on the imagination of the public, that a recently published book declares the public-house, the *Black Horse Inn*, swept away not long ago from Westminster Broadway, was the actual place from which the ride started and that the sign was in honour of Black Bess. But the inn is mentioned by Stowe, so was the *Black Horse*, a good two hundred years before Turpin crossed a saddle.

Here is the true story of that famous ride.

Nick Nevison, mounted on his mare of extraordinary beauty and speed and endurance, was haunting the road across Gadd's Hill, somewhere near the site of that house that was the home of Charles Dickens long afterwards, when a sailor, newly paid off from his ship, came swinging along in the darkness and suddenly found his way blocked by the man on the mare.

With a bad grace Jack Tar gave up his gold, and as Nevison pocketed the booty there came a party of Jack's messmates round the bend in the road to avenge their friend's injury and to make good his loss. Having no wish to use his pistol and knowing that without the weapon the odds were against him, Nevison wheeled the mare, and as the moon had broken through the clouds one of the sailors who came from Yorkshire, or the Midlands, at least, recognised the highwayman, calling out that he was Nick Nevison and so the watch should know.

Nevison rode at a gallop from the spot, and as he went realised his best hope lay in proving an alibi—he would get to York in record time and there show himself to people who knew him. It was believed he had sailed with Graham's force to Tangiers months before, and as he had proved himself a good soldier in Flanders it

would be easy to make men believe he had fought so well in Africa that he was home on leave—to use a modern term.

It was four o'clock in the morning when he began the great adventure, and from Gadd's Hill rode "hell for leather" to Gravesend. No boat was ready to ferry him across the river, but during the enforced wait he devoted himself to the mare, making sure her shoes were in good condition, that she was fed and watered. The boat appearing he and his mount were ferried to Tilbury, from whence he rode without drawing rein to Chelmsford. There he stopped to eat and drink, to rub the mare down and to give her some balls—a tonic mixture in which he had faith.

Through Cambridge and Huntingdon the road took him. He rested briefly at each of these towns and so went on to York, which he reached by a quarter to eight in the evening—roughly he had covered two hundred and twenty miles in fifteen hours.

Whether he rode all the way on that mare is a moot point—Defoe says he did, and so does Macaulay, but even granting he changed his mount two or three times during that wild rush, the last poor beast, a mare, fell exhausted on what is now York race-course, the spot marked as the scene of the death of the apocryphal Black Bess.

Before eight o'clock that night Nevison, showing no sign of fatigue, swaggered into a bowling-green at York where several people recognized him. The Lord Mayor was playing at bowls, and the adventurer, getting into conversation with him, offered to bet him a guinea in a wager which was concerned with the time. My Lord Mayor looked at his watch and made a special note of the hour.

When the tidings came that "Mr. John William Nevison, otherwise Nick Nevison, was wanted for highway robbery at Gadd's Hill," he was able to laugh at his accusers, so complete was his alibi, so convincing the evidence of his Worship, that Mr. Nevison having been with him at York at eight o'clock at night could not possibly have robbed a sailor in Kent in the early hours of the same morning.

After that Nevison had one of his spasms of honesty and kept clear of the law, amusing his friends with vivid accounts of imaginary adventures in Tangiers, but once when his tongue was loosened he confessed to that ride to York, and the story reached King Charles. No legal action was taken, but the King expressed his appreciation of the feat, and it was the royal lips that first described the highwayman as "Swift Nick Nevison."

At the end of a comparatively short time funds became scarce, and once more Nevison took to the road, this time distinguishing himself by stopping His Majesty's Judges as they rode in state to the various Assizes, a series of feats of dare-devilry whose indifference to danger can hardly be exaggerated.

Such outrages could not be tolerated, and *The Memoirs of Sir John Reesly* tell how Sir John approached the King, begged him to issue a special proclamation for the arrest of the highwayman since he had: "threatened death to several Justices of the Peace whenever he met them," besides being a notorious robber.

The proclamation was issued and a reward was offered, sufficiently great to stimulate activity.

Amongst those most energetic in the pursuit were two brothers named Fletcher, constables in York, who armed themselves with a warrant for the arrest of the outlaw. These men tracked him to an inn and, taking him at a disadvantage, told him he was their prisoner.

Two to one though they were, he fought free, and ran for the stable where his horse was. The Fletchers followed; when he had mounted they strove to drag him from the saddle, and in his desperation he drew a pistol and fired.

One of the brothers fell dead while the other

fled, and Nevison declared this was the only occasion when he had shed blood excepting as a soldier in battle.

The death of Fletcher gave fresh impetus to the chase, all the neighbourhood was anxious for the arrest, and still larger rewards were offered. He was run to earth by a Captain Hardcastle while resting at an inn at Thorpe near Wakefield, and being taken back to York was tried and executed on the 15th of March, 1685—the date found in the *Depositions of York Castle*, though according to Gent it was on the 4th of May.

CHAPTER III

JOAN PHILLIPS

THE WOMAN HIGHWAY ROBBER AND OTHERS OF HER ILK

> Would you increase the craft of womankind,
> Teach them new wiles and arts? As well you may
> Instruct a snake to bite, a wolf to prey.
>
> *Congrieve.*

FEW scenes could have been more ideal for the beginning of an idyll than the wooing of Ned Bracey and Joan Phillips in the green glades of Northamptonshire. She was a farmer's daughter, he a young fellow of good Northamptonshire family who had come south as what we might call an articled pupil to Mr. Phillips, and forthwith had fallen desperately in love with his master's handsome daughter, a tall, dashing girl, who seemed a fitting mate for him. Old-fashioned love-stories abound in romances where handsome apprentices win their masters' daughters, and willingly Joan gave her heart to handsome Ned Bracey but, for some reason not explained, Mr. Phillips would have none of the young man as a son-in-law and presently forbade the young couple to meet. The girl wept bitterly

in her lover's, arms and he, stung by the sight of her grief, decided to go away and to make a home for her in his own Yorkshire, for to remain under the Phillips' roof so near her and yet so far away would be impossible, he declared.

Frantically she pointed out the peril of what he suggested, since he was apprenticed to her father, and apprentices who broke their indentures were subject to very heavy penalties indeed. But he would take any risk for her, and tenderly he told her that he would seek his cousin, Mr. John William Nevison, who was settled in York, a man of wealth and importance, certain to help him for the sake of the blood tie between them. When he had made good he would send for her or come for her, and knew she would be willing to be his bride.

So they parted, with tears of hope and love, and Joan had a very hard time of it for the next few months, since on every hand she heard bitter words concerning her lover, for an apprentice to abscond was one of the seven deadly sins.

Apparently Bracey found opportunities of writing to her, since she had news of his reaching York, and knew his cousin, John William Nevison, had received him kindly; but what he did not say was that Nevison had told him exactly how he made his money and had enrolled young

ON THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

From an original drawing by J. Mills

Bracey as one of his gang, a colleague of that Thomas Tankard who has been mentioned already,

A little while went on thus, then while Bracey was in Nottingham a letter was brought to him from his Joan, a frantic letter, telling him her father had pledged her in marriage to a man she hated, begging him at all risks to save her from such a fate.

Bracey, who was a loyal lover whatever his faults, responded to that call. Back to Northampton he rode in hot haste at considerable risk to himself, and again in those green lanes where their troth had been plighted he met his Joan, this time by arrangement, since she had provided herself with a suit of boy's clothing and was riding astride upon a good horse. As fellow-adventurers they rode back to Nottingham and, after resting for a time, went on to the *Talbot Inn* at Newark. Here Bracey presented her as a new accomplice, John Phillips, to Nevison and Thomas Tankard. Both men, as well as the rest of the gang, accepted her without guessing her sex. Probably Bracey, deeply in love as he was, was afraid of what might happen if his comrades realised there was a woman in their ranks, and Joan was contented to accept all risks by his side.

Gladly would he have arranged to have left her behind at the *Talbot* or at some other resting-place, while he went out on his desperate ventures, but she insisted upon sharing his perils, so as a gallant boy she rode by his side, helping him in his robberies, playing her part as a dashing Knight of the Road.

Matters went on smoothly enough and without suspicion, until he and she stopped the coach which ran between Derby and Nottingham and did it so successfully they made away with a very large amount of booty.

The greatness of their prize was their undoing. Horse patrols turned out from both towns to hunt down the criminals, and Bracey with his lady-love had to ride hard to the old house at Farndon which apparently Joan had not visited before.

There Elizabeth Burton made them welcome; there they lay for a time safe from the emissaries of the law, but the old woman's suspicions were roused by the tender care Bracey showed his companion—she listened at keyholes, she spied, she watched, and came to a shrewd guess at the truth.

Bluntly she accused " John Phillips " of being a woman and with sudden tears Joan confessed her secret, begging the old woman not to betray

it. This Mrs. Burton promised, but Joan repeated what had happened to Bracey who, knowing how little Elizabeth Burton was to be trusted, decided they could not remain in such a hiding-place longer. In dead of night they rode from Farndon, and hardly stayed until they reached Bristol, where Joan resumed woman's clothing and the pair invested the money they had obtained from the coach in a public-house, in which for some years they led quite exemplary lives. There is a tradition that Joan was particularly successful as a landlady, all the visitors in the house being fascinated by her beauty and kindliness. Probably the young couple had no business instinct, however, or perhaps they were not suited for honest trade, certain it is that either the inn business was a failure or else they wearied for the excitement of the road, and presently they returned to Nottingham to try their luck on the familiar highways, although the Nevison gang had been broken up.

For some time they were successful; then in the spring of 1685, that year in which Nevison was executed, Joan Phillips stopped a coach and four singlehanded on the Loughborough Road, near Nottingham. The gentleman riding in the carriage was not cowed so easily as most travellers, however. He pretended to yield up his

valuables, and whilst the "highwayman" was counting the booty, he dealt "him" so hard a blow that the girl reeled in the saddle and after that capture was easy. The patrol came up at a gallop, Joan was made prisoner and carried to the prison at Nottingham where her sex was discovered.

She was tried at the Lent Assizes at practically the same time that Nevison was being tried in York, and being sentenced to death was hanged in April, 1685. Tradition says the execution took place at the end of Wilford Lane, and afterwards, her body being given to friends, was interred with all honour in one of the churchyards at Nottingham.

Her death left Bracey brokenhearted and more reckless than ever. A few weeks later he was run to earth and died fighting, swearing he would not be taken alive.

That story of Joan Phillips is the most circumstantial we have of any heroine of the road, and makes her the most romantic, but very few stories have come down to us of such adventuresses which possess any suggestion of truth.

Highway robbery was not popular with what writers of the day called "the fair sex," probably because the dress worn by women during the

century and a half through which the true highwayman flourished did not lend itself to athletic exercise. When woman rode it was on pillions, chairs strapped to the cruppers of heavy draught horses, or if they were daring enough to use the side saddle and to manage their horses alone they were looked upon as wonders of bravery——*vide* Scott's Diana Vernon. Further, they were handicapped by the extraordinary length and weight of the habits they were doomed to wear, as well as by the fact that their saddles had only pommels set opposite each other. In such a saddle a woman had no grip, so was easily unseated by the stumble of her mount, while for any girl to hint at riding astride would have been considered the height of impropriety.

The Newgate Calendar and similar records contain long lists of female criminals. Approximately as many women as men died at Tyburn and other places of public execution, and in Johnson's *Lives of the Highwaymen* are included "The German Princess" and "Nan of Hertford," but they were not highwaywomen, if the word may be coined, they were adventuresses to whose class belong the Yorkshire Witch and Jenny Diver and many another law-breaking female. It was in the streets and the byways of the cities these carried on their nefarious trades as pickpockets

and sneak-thieves. Not for them were the dashing adventures of the King's Highway.

More near to the Gentlemen of the High Toby, in spirit if not in actual crime, was Margaret Catchpole, but even she cannot be included in their category, since she stole a horse only that she might follow her lover to London, and apart from that adventure had no desire to take to the road. In Hone's *Everyday Book*, however, there is a quotation lifted from the *Gentleman's Magazine* which may be given, though unfortunately the details are meagre :

> " On the 24th of November, 1735, a butcher in Essex was rode up to by a woman well mounted on a side saddle, who, to his astonishment, presented a pistol and demanded his money. In amazement he demanded what she meant, and received his answer from a good-looking man who, coming to him on horseback, said he was a brute to deny the lady's request, and enforced his conviction by telling him if he did not gratify her desire immediately he would shoot him through the head. The butcher could not resist an invitation to be gallant when supported by such arguments, and he placed his watch and six guineas in her hand."

A clear case of a woman highwayman—but there is a ring about the story that suggests the lady was an amateur at her work, relying on the presence of her good-looking companion to help her in carrying it out. Indeed, there is the possibility that she was trying her hand at robbery by way of a joke.

Here is the story of the "female highway robber" which Johnson tells. It is remarkable in many ways; only as he gives neither names nor date, verification is impossible.

A very unpleasant character was Thomas Rumbold, the son of an Ipswich bricklayer, though if the stories told of him are on the strength of his confessions—and it is difficult to see what other foundation they could have had —he missed his vocation and should have been a writer of fiction. For instance, there is one extraordinary tale how he pretended to be mad and managed to steal fourteen hundred pounds from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and another concerning his seduction of a farmer's daughter, which reads as a page from a romantic novel of the times. After he had left the farm, where he had ingratiated himself with the family, he had his adventure with the female highwayman.

Riding along a very lonely road towards London he found the way led past a thick coppice

which filled a valley between two hills, and as he gained the shadow of the trees a well-mounted young man—as it seemed—darted from the shadows and placing his horse across the road called to the traveller to " Stand and Deliver."

Rumbold did not retort with the phrase Tom King had used in like circumstances. Instead, he pretended he was fumbling in his pockets for his money, and in doing so drew his pistol and fired at the robber, without effect.

" If you are for sport you shall have it," cried the other, and drawing a pistol fired also, wounding Rumbold slightly in the left leg—the fact that they must have been at close quarters yet did so little harm is a commentary on the pistols of the times. Before Rumbold could recover himself the stranger had cut the reins of his horse and in its terror it started at a gallop, but Rumbold turned in his saddle and emptied his second pistol at the stranger. This time the shot went home, not the rider but the horse fell dead, while a little later Rumbold " dismounted " —which seems a polite way of saying he was flung from his saddle.

He was not hurt, so drawing his sword ran back to where the other robber stood beside the dead horse, and they fought, but Rumbold proving the better fencer, the other stumbled

and fell fainting. Rather surprised Rumbold tore away the coat, intent on rifling the pockets, and as the stranger's eyes opened and a very feminine exclamation fell on his ears, he made the remarkable discovery that the " young man " was an extremely pretty woman.

Thomas Rumbold was ready for any romantic adventure, and made himself so agreeable to the fainting lady that when she had recovered from her swoon she suggested he should visit her at her home.

He accepted readily, on which she led the way into the coppice and, passing by narrow, twisting paths between the trees, reached a very lonely house, so secluded that " the sun had not shone on it since the Deluge." To his surprise, however, it contained elegantly furnished rooms, in one of which a very excellent meal was set before the unexpected guest, and when they had eaten and drunk she told him her history.

She was the daughter of a " sword cutler " and, from her infancy, weapons had exercised a fascination for her. " I could never bear to be among the utensils of the kitchen, but was constantly in my father's shop and took wonderful delight in handling the warlike instruments he made. To take a sharp, well-mounted sword in my hand and brandish it was my chief recreation."

One day a gentleman came into the shop, and by his " postures " she decided he was a fencing master. Daring greatly she followed him into the street and there, overtaking him, begged him to give her lessons in swordsmanship without telling her parents. The request was astonishing from a girl of twelve, but the master agreed, and after that she slipped from her home to visit his house again and again till she " became so expert at back-sword and single rapier that she no longer required his assistance and her parents never once discovered the transaction."

While still very young she was married to an innkeeper with whom she began to quarrel on their wedding-day. He was a rough man and, worse still from her point of view, he was extremely mean, and, as she put it rather unpleasantly, she " thought it inconsistent that a dung-hill cock should crow over a game hen."

Perhaps as much from love of adventure as because her miserly husband kept her short of money, she decided to take to the road and obtained a suit of men's clothing and a good horse. As landlady of the inn it was easy for her to discover what travellers were well supplied with money and who were not. It was her custom to let those she marked for her prey start on their journey, when she, in her neat print gown, would

stand at the door saying her farewells. As soon as they had gone she darted to this house in the wood where she kept her disguise, donned it, mounted, and was across country to commit her robbery some distance from her home.

Market days were the ones on which she carried out the most daring of her plans, since then it was easy to make an excuse for her absence from home. Thus she led a double life, once, so she boasted, actually robbing her own husband on a dark night when he was returning with a purse of guineas.

Eloquently did the lady talk till it grew late when she confessed herself tired, and it was decided they should postpone the end of her recital until the morning, Rumbold assuring her that he was looking forward to hearing more with great eagerness.

Apparently some change had taken place in her arrangements; she must have left her husband to make her regular home in the lonely house, for there she stayed that night. Unfortunately for the romance of the affair, Rumbold had seen the beauty of the gold bracelets and brooch she wore, and his cupidity conquered his curiosity concerning her story. Once again that very absurd proverb that there is honour among thieves was contradicted. In dead of night, the

guest to whom she had given hospitality and trusted with her story, helped himself to her money and jewels and was off and away before morning broke, riding a horse he had found in her stable.

Unfortunately no other record of that extraordinary woman remains.

As for Rumbold, he was such a mean scamp it is almost pleasant to have to record he was arrested for the robbery of a goldsmith in Lombard Street and duly executed at Tyburn.

THE FEMALE ROBBER, OR TURPIN'S SISTER

(Evidently this was a popular song for many years, but probably the story it tells is pure fiction founded on the account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* given already, Rumford and Ware being no great distance apart. In spite of the sub-title of the ballad there is no suggestion that the heroine was a relative of Turpin. His name is used as being typical of all that was most dashing and romantic among highwaymen.)

Ye females of every nation,
  Give ear to my frolicksome song,
The like was ne'er known in the nation,
  'Twas done by a female so young.

She bought her a horse and a bridle,
  With saddle and pistols also,
Resolving not to remain idle,
  But out on the highway she'd go.

She clothed herself with great splendour,
  Her breeches and sword she had on,
Her body appeared mighty slender,
  'Twas dressed like a pretty young man.

And thus like a robber so pretty,
  She mounted with speed on her mare,
She left all her friends in the city,
  And steered her course toward Ware.

The first she met was a grocer,
  Walking with a cane in his hand,
She soon to the spark rode up closer
  And boldly she bade him to stand.

She took from him only one guinea,
The next was a tailor with shears,
Because the poor rogue had no money
She nimbly cut off both his ears.

There was too a pinching old tanner,
For the loss of his money he cried,
Because the poor rogue bawled so loudly
She bravely tanned his hide.

The next was an honest exciseman,
She told him she must have the prize,
She robbed him of eighty gold guineas
Which he had received for excise.

The next was a cheating quack doctor
Whose clothes were all daubed o'er with lace,
She took both his clothes and his money,
It was a most pitiful case.

The next was an honest old lawyer,
At Assizes he pleaded the Laws,
She took both his watch and his money,
And this was the truth of the cause.

The next was a greasy fat landlord,
Whose paunch held a hogshead of beer,
She ransacked him of forty gold guineas,
While he shook in his doublet with fear.

The next that came up were four robbers,
Well-mounted on brave prancing nags,
She desired them to stand and deliver
And told them she wanted their bags.

The highwaymen all drew their rapiers,
She bid them stand on their guard,
Then away this fair maid did caper,
The highwaymen followed her hard.

They followed and soon overtook her,
And gathered so fiercely around,
But as they made search for the lucre
By Jakers ! a woman they found.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN JAMES HIND

THE HERO-MARTYR OF THE CAVALIERS

Into the Devil tavern
  Three booted troopers strode,
From spur to feather spotted and splashed
  With the mud of the winter road.
In each of their cups they dropped a crust
  And stared at the guests with a frown,
Then drew their swords and roared for a toast,
  " God send this crumb-well-down."

Away they dashed through Temple Bar,
  Their red cloaks flowing free,
Their scabbards clashed, each backpiece shone—
  None like to touch the three.
The silver cups that held the crusts
  They flung to the startled town,
Shouting again with a blaze of swords,
  " God send this Crum-well-down."

Walter Thornby.

THE house door opened softly, into the night two figures came, a mother, weeping very bitterly, and a gallant boy whose sword was newly buckled on. Softly they crept to the gate and there paused, the mother took the lad in her arms, kissing him tenderly, weeping

afresh and yet her eyes were full of pride as they rested on his.

"God keep you safe always," she whispered, and then: "God forgive me if I have done wrong in helping you this night."

"But, mother, how can you have done wrong?" the lad cried. "The King is fighting for his crown; it's the work of all loyal men to join his banners. I fight for him and for the Church, and should be a coward if I stayed at home with the crop-eared master to whom my father bound me apprentice."

"I know, I know," the mother said. "The men of my own kin are fighting for the King as you will fight, but your father——"

"My father stays at home." The lad's voice took a note of contempt. "But I will prove I am my mother's son. Give me your blessing, mother, and let us part. I go at the call of duty, surely you would rather I went thus than I was unworthy of your love."

Which was how James Hind left his home at Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire to adventure forth for his King.

The father with whom he had so little in common is described by Johnson as "a gentleman who was a cheerful companion and a good Christian," which last means that he had no very

strict opinions as to King or Parliament, but going to church regularly managed to keep out of the broils and troubles of the times.

Though the land was aflame with civil war, Mr. Hind remained safe at home, while when his son left school he took care to apprentice him to a master who was a strong Parliament man. Loyal to the core, thrilling with the romantic devotion of a true cavalier, the position was intolerable for the hot-headed boy; but the laws governing apprenticeships were strict and punishments for defaulting apprentices correspondingly heavy. At home young James Hind had no sympathy from his father, but his mother came of cavalier stock and shared in his dreams—she understood his longings and loved him the better for his loyalty. In the end she supplied him with what money she could, she saw him buckle on his sword and in dead of night she watched while he went on foot to join the royal army.

The date on which he left home is not clear, nor is it told how long he served with the forces, but granting he joined up in his early teens he must have enlisted early in the Civil War, thus he would have taken part in most of the great engagements up to the Battle of Nazeby that saw the wreck of the royalist hopes.

After Nazeby he was in London, still following

the fortunes of his King, and was one of that crowd which thronged Westminster Hall to see Charles tried for his life on the spot marked to-day with the brass plate that shows where the monarch stood, never more kingly than at the moment of his fall.

With swelling heart and inward fury James Hind watched the stately figure of the King, and from being an honest loyalist he became a wild fanatic. Sonorously, terribly, that sentence of death was passed by Justice Bradshaw, and of all within the crowd who turned away shocked, horrified, mourning, James Hind was in the deepest depths of despair.

That snowy January morning came when the King walked unflinchingly across St. James's Park from his palace to that balcony at Whitehall where the headsman struck the fatal blow. In the crowd James Hind watched as the axe fell, he saw the masked man hold up the bleeding head proclaiming: "Charles Stuart, traitor." Bitter words fell from Hind's lips and as he spoke a hand was laid upon his arm. He found a man by his side and as they looked into each other's eyes each knew that here was a kindred spirit, here was a loyalist whose one hope was to avenge the King.

Together they walked from that scene of treason

and horror and presently exchanged names. The other man was William Allen, and later in his lodgings they sat together reading proofs of a pamphlet which Allen had written entitled *Killing no Murder.* In this he called on all loyal men to end the life of Oliver Cromwell, the newly appointed Protector, as an act of retribution for the execution of the King.

Whether Hind had any part in the actual writing of that pamphlet or not is doubtful, but he shared the expenses of its publication and, not contented with writing the creed of violence, Allen proved he was prepared to follow his own advice and in this Hind entered heart and soul.

Cromwell had left town for a short rest; he was staying at his home at North End, Huntingdon, but was due back in London in a few days. His journey townwards would be across the lonely Cambridgeshire fens, a district Allen knew well, and he suggested he and Hind should lie in wait for the coach to pass and there avenge their King.

James Hind was ready. He spent such money as he had on the purchase of a good horse and rode with his friend on their desperate errand. Almost to Huntingdon they went, but where the way was very lonely they drew rein, waiting

with pistols in their grip for the arrival of the man they hated.

The coach in which Cromwell rode came in sight, a lumbering vehicle drawn by six horses, with two postillions and a coachman, two armed servants riding on either side, an escort of seven in all, and all well armed.

The coach had come abreast of the adventurers when the voice of Allen rang out :

" Oliver Cromwell, prepare to meet thy God."

His pistol barked, so did that of James Hind, but the shots went wide, and instead of looking to their own safety and leaving their master to his fate, as was the way with most postillions and footmen, the servants rallied magnificently to the defence. Force of numbers told. Will Allen's horse fell dying, pinning down its rider who became an easy prisoner, while Hind, unable to help his friend, rode at a gallop, outdistancing pursuit.

That gallop ended in his horse falling in a desolate place, when he discovered the poor beast had been mortally wounded though it had borne him to safety. He loosed the girths and removed the bridle, all the mercy he could show, then took his pistol from his holster as his sole possession, and set forth he knew not whither.

All through the night he walked, resting by

day in such hiding-places as he could find, walking further the next night, yet never going far from the spot where their attempt on the Protector's life had been made. On the third day he dared to enter an inn and heard the news he dreaded. An attack had been made on the life of Mr. Oliver Cromwell as he rode in his coach-and-six, but by the mercy of God the murderous intent had been frustrated. Cromwell was safe, one of the malignants had escaped, while the other lay in Huntingdon awaiting trial.

Hind's first idea was to rescue Allen, and he set out for Huntingdon, but unfortunately the Huntingdon Assizes were being held; so Allen had been brought to trial at once—so long as a judge was sitting there were no preliminaries to be observed.

James Hind entered the town only to mingle with the crowd flocking to the gallows where, protesting his loyalty to his King, his pride in being allowed to die a martyr to the cause, Allen met his fate bravely.

In desperate straits Hind left Huntingdon with its tragic memories, and was in the open country once more. His first need was a horse, but money was short, therefore a horse he must get without paying for it.

For some distance he trudged on, when in a

lonely lane he came upon a sturdy brown cob tied to a gate-post, a saddle on its back and behind the saddle a portmanteau which suggested the animal belonged to some person of importance who was about to start a journey, and had turned aside to visit the cottage at a little distance among the trees. The chance was too good to be neglected, but time was short, for as Hind came on the scene the gentleman in question appeared at the cottage door to come leisurely along the path. Hind had untethered the cob before the gentleman was aware what was on foot, but when he understood he began to run towards the gate at his best speed—apparently it was not great.

"Hey—hey," he called. "Sirrah, let go that cob—it is mine."

Hind was in the saddle, but reined up to retort:

"Think yourself fortunate, sir, that I have taken only your horse and baggage, but have left you your money in your pockets. If you are wise you will spend that quickly, since should we meet again you may not find me so considerate."

With which he cantered away, a fully-fledged highwayman, to take to the road in good earnest.

A long distance he rode on the brown cob,

heading towards the south. It was near Saffron Walden he had his next recorded adventure. By that time he had discovered the plump brown cob was no fitting mount for a High Toby-man whose life depended on the speed of his horse. He was riding at leisure along the road when he heard the clip-clop of hoofs behind, and light, fast, almost dancing, were those beats, made by the horse of blood and breed that any man might be proud to bestride.

Over his shoulder he looked to see a gentleman of the hard-riding, hard-betting variety, mounted on a noble bay, a perfect horse strong in wind and limb.

As the gentleman came abreast Hind hailed him, asking directions as to the way, on which the other, being a good fellow, obligingly drew rein to direct him. One word led to another, the squire was not fond of his own company, and Hind had an adventurer's charm, so they rode onward together, the impatient bay being reined in to keep pace beside the sedate brown cob. Naturally the conversation turned on horseflesh, the squire explaining he was a Newmarket man and had bred the bay himself. It was the pride of his stables, the best ever foaled, he was taking it to a nobleman who had promised to give five hundred pounds for it as a

By permission of the *City Art Gallery, Leeds*

WITH ALL THEIR BANNERS BRAVELY SPREAD

From a painting by Sir John Gilbert

Cavaliers, with whom rode James Hind and Philip Stafford, going into action. (See pages 118 and 130)

steeplechaser. No horse in the land could go so fast nor take his jumps so cleverly.

"There's nothing he can't clear," said the squire in his boasting. "If I were to put him at yon brick wall he'd take it in his stride."

"No, no, that's impossible," retorted Hind—he had gauged his man by that time. "I would not willingly doubt your word, sir, but to expect a horse to jump that wall is to court death for him and his rider. I beg—I beg most earnestly—you will not attempt it."

"I'll bet you twenty guineas it can be done," laughed the squire, and the more Hind expostulated the more determined he became, till the bet was agreed upon.

The squire backed the bay to get as long a run as possible, then with a view-hallo rode at the brick wall. The boast had not been vain, for the good bay gathered himself together and rising, literally took the obstacle in his stride.

There was a gate in the wall, through which the squire rode back waving his hat.

"What did I tell you, sir?" he cried. "Give me your guineas, for the bay has won them well."

Hind seemed to be feeling in his pockets for his money.

"You have won the guineas truly, sir," he said, "but I will not lay the credit to the bay.

Good as the horse is, your horsemanship is better. Had another man been in the saddle he would have come to grief."

"Zounds, man, you are wrong," retorted the squire, divided between his pleasure at the flattering of himself and his anger that his horse should be belittled.

"I'll double the wager and bet you a round forty guineas that the horse will fail at the jump if he has me on his back," said Hind.

"Done," roared the squire, who must have been a particularly foolish man to overlook the risk he ran of having his horse seriously injured. However, out of the saddle he sprang; the next moment Hind was in it, he had the horse ready for the run and gave it its head.

Straight as an arrow, light as a bird, it dashed past its lawful owner, over the wall—through the orchard on the other side—and so to another road——

The squire was left to console himself with the brown cob as best he could.

Thus equipped James Hind started on his career as a highwayman, and yet from first to last he must never be confused with such law-breakers as Dick Turpin or Nick Nevison; indeed, he is typical of those many cavalier gentlemen who took to the road as a means of retrieving

their lost fortunes and of continuing their fight for the King. Law-breaker though he was, it is impossible to place him in the same category as most of the adventurers whose stories are told here.

As soon as he had money he made his way back to London, where he took a house and faced the world as a law-abiding citizen, though doubtless many looked upon the establishment with eyes of suspicion since it was the meeting-place of "malignants." Within those walls, with James Hind as host, men gathered to discuss royalist plots in secret, there they drank to the young King in his exile and there they dreamed of the Restoration.

All their plans, however, needed money; messengers had to be dispatched to the Continent that the cavaliers here might keep in touch with their sympathisers across the water, and other friends had to be given hospitality. Most of them were in direst need, outfits of clothing as well as food being necessary, so many gallant gentlemen had been brought to the depths of poverty by their loyalty to the lost cause.

In their deepest need these fugitives came to James Hind, confident he would help and shelter them, and it was to obtain money required for

this purpose that he carried on what he considered perfectly justifiable guerilla warfare. Directly funds were required for any special purpose—to send emissaries to the King—to help cavaliers who were destitute—or for what we might term the publicity department which would spread the royalist cause throughout the land—that bay horse was saddled and its master disappeared from amongst his highly respectable neighbours, returning with funds to devote himself anew to loyalist propaganda until his party's coffers needed replenishing once more.

No special district was favoured by his activities more than another. As far west as Dorset, northward to Northampton, east through Essex, south in Surrey and Hampshire, stories of his exploits are told, while near London he was identified with every open space across which a main road ran. Hounslow Heath—Highgate Woods—Wanstead Flats—Blackheath—in all by turn the name of James Hind became a terror to travellers, so we may conclude he lived his respectable life under an *alias*.

True to his determination that the Parliamentarians should suffer, he made it his business to take special toll of those who had signed the death-warrant of his King, learning their movements in advance and laying his plans with care.

There was poetic justice that the gold of "traitors" should be used to help the loyalist cause.

To Sherborne he tracked Judge Bradshaw, who had pronounced sentence of death on the King, and waited for him on the road between Sherborne and Shaftesbury—the judge was on Circuit. When the coach-and-six lumbered into view, out of the shelter of the hedge sprang Hind on his bay, and at the pistol's point ordered the great man to "Stand and Deliver," while the postillions came to a stop and the other servants fled.

Bradshaw was not wanting in courage, besides, he was under the impression that his name would carry terror to any outlaw.

"Sirrah, do you dare to stop me?" he demanded. "I would have you know that I am Serjeant Bradshaw who has power to hang you."

"Bradshaw, are you?" said Hind. "Then thou king-killing knave, it is your good fortune that I have vowed to have no man's blood on my hands, else I would kill you for what you did at Westminster. As it is, you may have your life till the hangman takes it, but you will hand me over all the money you carry."

With great reluctance Bradshaw handed over

a purse containing a considerable sum, on which Hind first addressed a long speech to the gold—so Johnson says—then turned to the judge once more.

"You and your infernal crew have a long while run on like Jehu in a career of blood and impiety," he said. "Falsely pretending that zeal for the Lord of Hosts has been your only motive. How long you may be suffered to continue the same course, God only knows; however, I will for this time stop your race in the literal sense of the word."

On which he deliberately shot dead the six horses in the coach, leaving the judge stranded by the roadside, face to face with very considerable discomfort.

Hugh Peters, another of the regicides, was stopped in the recesses of Enfield Chase, when he too showed courage and made an appeal to Hind, recognising him as a man of education. Starting with the question whether he did not remember the Commandment "Thou shalt not steal," he worked himself up to a flow of eloquence on the enormity of the crime of robbery, ending with the precept of Solomon, "Rob not the poor because he is poor."

Hind was equal to the occasion, promptly retorting in the same strain.

"Verily," said he, "If thou hadst learned the divine precepts as thou oughtest to have done, thou wouldst not have wrested them to such an abominable and wicked sense as thou didst the words of the prophet when he said, 'Bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron.' Didst thou not then, detestable hypocrite, endeavour from these words to aggravate the misfortunes of thy royal master whom thy detestable party murdered before the gates of his own palace . . . But it is little purpose for us to dispute. Deliver thy money, or else I shall send you out of the world to join the Devil thy master."

Peters obeyed without further demur, but even when the purse was handed over Hind was not contented, he demanded the other's coat and cloak as well—why, is not clear unless as a disguise, or the weather was so stormy he needed protection. The sombre garments of a devout Presbyterian such as Hugh Peters would not be suitable wear for a dashing cavalier.

However, cloak and coat Hind secured, leaving the regicide shivering. Nor did the adventure end there so far as Peters was concerned.

On the following Sunday he ascended the pulpit to preach as was his wont, and rather unfortunately—since the story of the robbery

had leaked out—he started his sermon with the words :

" I have put off my coat, how then shall I put it on ? "

A man seated near, gave him his answer :

" Upon my soul, sir, I fear none can tell you that, unless Captain Hind be here."

The account adds : " Which ready answer to the Scriptural question put the congregation into such fits of laughter that the preacher had to descend from his pulpit."

News was brought to Hind that General Harrison, most intolerant of regicides, was travelling from Reading to London on a certain day, with the result that outside Reading town the highwayman waited for his prey. Terrible old man as he was, Harrison could not have been easy to rob, but Hind secured seventy gold guineas.

That victory was to prove the dearest of all, for the general roused the country, swearing by every oath he allowed himself to utter, that vengeance should be taken for that day's work. The countryside was in arms, and Hind, who had taken refuge in an inn, learned pursuers were hot on his track. Weary though he was, he had to start on the road again and was riding slowly, his horse being almost done, up the

steep of Knowle Hill, when he heard the thunder of galloping hoofs behind. In vain he spurred his horse. The animal behind was fresh and overtook the weary beast without difficulty.

Desperate, Hind turned in the saddle, and on the spur of the moment fired full at the other rider who was close upon him. For once a pistol of the seventeenth century did not miss fire, the man threw up his arms and fell from the saddle—dead.

No other pursuers being in sight Hind continued his flight, finding what comfort he might in the thought that this was the only time he was guilty of bloodshed. A little later he knew bitter remorse, since it transpired the man was no thief-taker, but the servant who had been told to meet his master on a particular horse at a certain spot at a certain hour. Lingering at an inn by the way, he was near being late for the appointment, which accounted for the fact that he rode at full gallop and did not draw rein when Hind warned him.

So fierce was the pursuit by General Harrison that Hind was compelled to remain in hiding, and being reduced to great poverty even sold the bay horse—we are not told how his London house was carried on in the meantime, but that establishment seems to have continued to exist.

Presently he secured another horse, and of that time two other adventures are recorded.

As he rode along the highway between Petersfield and Portsmouth a post-chaise came in sight. At once he approached, his pistol levelled at the postillion and the too familiar "Stand and Deliver" rang out. The postillion stopped his horses readily enough, but from the chaise rose a most appalling chorus of women's screams.

Hind rode close to the vehicle and found it was occupied by two women only, one young and very fair, and her woman attendant.

Off came his hat. He was too good a knight of the road not to be polite.

"Do not be alarmed, ladies," he said. "I wish you no harm, but find myself in poverty so am compelled to ask you to help me on my way. Kindly give me all the money in your possession."

"But, sir, we have nothing of our own," exclaimed the elder woman who was extremely foolish. "Here in this coach we have three thousand guineas, it is true, but they are the dowry of this fair lady who journeys to London to wed a gallant knight."

"The knight is so fortunate to have her as his bride he does not need a dowry," Hind retorted. "Thus I should feel no robber if I took the whole three thousand. But that I will not do, for the

sake of your bright eyes, lady. Give me but a third of the fortune and take the rest to your knight with my good wishes for his happiness and yours."

The money was made up in separate bags, each containing a thousand guineas, and with one of these in his saddlebag James Hind made off, after rewarding the postillion boy for his complacency. As he went he looked behind and knew that from the chaise window the eyes of the bride-elect were following him.

So deep an impression the girl had made on him that the highwayman took care to learn what happened at her journey's end, and the tragedy of it bit deep. Afterwards he said this was the only one of his adventures which caused him regret.

On reaching London the girl and her attendant told her intended bridegroom exactly what had happened, on which that gentleman retorted he would not marry her for a penny less than the three thousand pounds agreed upon, therefore as she had brought only two thousand she must go back to her father till the sum could be made up. Her reply was spirited. She told him that she would return to Portsmouth gladly enough, as no consideration would induce her to marry so mercenary a creature as he had shown himself.

Further, she added that the robber who had carried off her thousand pounds had done her a good service by saving her from such a match. She showed a splendid spirit and pride, yet the blow was hard, she took it deeply to heart and died a few months after her return to Portsmouth —there was a suggestion of suicide.

More cheerful is Hind's adventure of the Wantage Road which happened soon afterwards.

The thousand pounds did not last long, as indeed it could not do when his home was the resort of ruined gentlemen by the score, and he kept open table for all. He was absolutely penniless as he rode along the Wantage Road, and was in urgent need of money for some purpose not specified. No travellers of importance were in sight, the road was deserted, till he fell in with a very poor man riding a little donkey.

Hind curbed his horse and began a conversation with the poor man, asking him where he was going.

" To Wantage market to buy a cow," was the answer. " So that I may have milk to give my children."

" How many children have you ? " was Hind's next question, and he was told they numbered ten. Next he wanted to know how much the

father of the family intended to give for the cow.

"It can be but forty shillings, master," was the reply. "That is all the money, I have, and I have been scraping for two years to save it."

"Why, then it would be a sin to take it from you," said the highwayman. "Yet the money is necessary to me at this time, so I must have it. Do not be afraid. I may rob Parliamentarians of their wealth, but I shall not take the milk from little children. Give me your forty shillings quietly, and meet me again this day se'en-night at this place and I will pay you back with interest."

The man complied, he could hardly do anything else, and at the end of the fortnight was back at the cross-roads, with little hope of restitution. But there was the gentleman on the good horse waiting as he had promised. To that poor man Hind gave a purse of nine guineas that he might buy not one cow but two, and they the best in the market, and have a guinea over to spare.

All these adventures must have been performed within a short period, since it was in 1649 that Charles I died and Allen and Hind plotted the attack on Cromwell, and in the following year came the tidings that the Scottish

Presbyterians had disagreed with the Parliamentarians in England and had decided to proclaim the exiled Charles II as their King. His banner was raised, and throughout the land loyal gentlemen hurried to the north to offer their swords.

With this gallant throng went James Hind, and as he had seen service earlier was given a captaincy at once. With his young King he returned to England by way of Carlisle, and at Warrington had another meeting with General Harrison, though this time they were members of rival armies on the field, not highwayman and victim.

Harrison rushed his men to the Mersey hoping to break down Warrington Bridge in time to prevent the southward march of the cavaliers, but by forced marches the loyalist army was well ahead, and when Harrison arrived he was able only to harass them in the rear with no great loss. So through Cheshire and Shropshire the army came to Worester where Charles II was solemnly proclaimed King of England by the city's mayor.

The success was short-lived. Cromwell hurried from London at the head of thirty thousand men; Lambert, another Parliamentarian of distinction, was master of the bridge across the

Severn at Upton, and General Harrison was coming to the attack from the north.

Outside Worcester walls the battle was fought. The cavaliers made a splendid stand but were outnumbered six to one, and their enemies had the advantage of careful drilling and the support of artillery. Five hours that struggle raged between British men on British soil, and when it was over Cromwell wrote in his dispatch: "This has been a very glorious mercy and as stiff a contest for four or five hours as I have ever seen."

Three thousand loyalists lay dead on the field, ten thousand more were prisoners, and the rest flying for their lives—the young King was amongst the fugitives, and all know how he escaped by hiding in the boughs of the Boscobel oak that twenty-ninth of May.

It is interesting that the Commonwealth prided itself on its merciful treatment of its war prisoners, for it was stated with great satisfaction that though the nobility and leaders died on scaffolds throughout the country, "of the common soldiers taken prisoners the greater part were sent to the plantations (as slaves), and fifteen hundred were granted to Guinea merchants and employed to work in the mines of Africa."

An eye-witness of the scene in the London

slave markets, James Heath in his *Chronicle of the Late Intestine War of the Three Kingdoms*, describes the selling of these soldiers from Worcester Field :

> " Next day, the 13th, the common prisoners were brought through Westminster to Tothill Fields—a sadder spectacle was never seen except the miserable place of their defeat—and were sold to several merchants to be sent to Barbadoes."

The climate of the West Indian Islands was believed to be impossible for Europeans ; thus it was specially ordered political prisoners must be despatched thither, the more healthy lands and the somewhat lighter servitude of Virginia or Pennsylvania being kept for criminals. Macaulay gives this account of the punishment of the Monmouth rebels a few years later than Worcester—need it be pointed out that this sentence was imposed by the other party, so there was little to choose between the one or the other ? Whatever Government was in power made self-preservation its first law, and meted heavy penalties on any who dared to rebel though that rebellion were for conscience sake :

> " These men, more wretched than their associates who suffered death, were distributed

into gangs—the conditions were that the convicts should be carried beyond the sea as slaves, that they should not be emancipated for ten years and that their place of banishment should be some West Indian island. This last article was specially framed for the purpose of aggravating the misery of the exiles. In New England or New Jersey they would have found a population kindly disposed to them and a climate not unfavourable to their health and vigour.

"It was therefore determined that they should be sent to Colonies where a Puritan could hope to inspire little sympathy and where a labourer born in the temperate zone could hope to enjoy little health. Such was the state of the slave market that these bondmen, long as was the passage and sickly as they were likely to prove, were still very valuable. . . .

"The human cargoes were stowed close in the holds of small vessels. So little space was allowed that the wretches, many of whom were still tormented by unhealed wounds, could not all lie down at once without lying on one another. They were never suffered to go on deck. The hatchways were constantly watched by sentinels armed with hangers and blunder-

busses. The dungeon below was all darkness, stench, lamentation and disease. Of ninety-nine convicts who were carried out in one vessel twenty-one died before they reached Jamaica, although the voyage was performed with unusual speed. The survivors, when they arrived at their house of bondage, were mere skeletons. During some weeks coarse biscuits and fetid water had been doled out to them in such scanty measure that any one of them could easily have consumed the ration which was assigned to five. They were therefore in such a state that the merchant to whom they were assigned found it expedient to fatten them before selling them."

More fortunate than many of his comrades, Hind succeeded in reaching London in safety, and settled down in his house as if his absence had been connected with ordinary business. Soon fugitives came knocking at his door, begging for shelter, and never did such a summons go unheeded. Always that door was opened, and the men, wounded and broken and beggared by the war, found care and rest and friendship in that loyal house.

Now comes the most ugly part of the story.

Many months went by thus, the excitement of

the rising and of the escape of the King had died, and the Government was considering the proclamation of a General Pardon, though meanwhile constables and other officials were energetic in their hunting of the fugitives.

One such fell into their hands in London and, miserable wretch that he was, told them that if he were promised a pardon he would give the name of the man who had sheltered him since his coming to London and had sheltered many of his friends as well. The infamous bargain was made and James Hind was given up to the Law. According to one account the man who betrayed him was his most intimate friend.

That Hind had played a very important part in the royal army and had distinguished himself as a soldier is proved from the severity of his treatment after arrest, and, be it remembered the charge against him was High Treason, there is no suggestion that he was even suspected of highway robbery then. Johnson tells us :

> " Hind was carried before the Speaker of the House of Commons, and after a long examination was committed to Newgate and loaded with irons, nor was any person allowed to converse with him without a special grant. He was brought to the bar of the Session

House at the Old Bailey—but for want of sufficient evidence nothing worthy of death could be proved against him."

Unfortunately, General Harrison attended that trial in the hope that he might identify the prisoner with one who had been prominent in the campaign, and to his surprise recognised the highwayman who had taken his seventy pounds. From that time Hind's doom was sealed, for Harrison knew no mercy. Further investigations were made, with the result Hind was carried to Reading to stand his trial for the shooting of George Symson, the servant on Knowle Hill.

Of his guilt there was no doubt and sentence of death was passed, but by that time the Government had issued its "Act of Indemnity for all Past Offences" and he hoped to be included in it. So he would have been, but Harrison remained vindictive, and exercising special influence, obtained the decision that the Act did not refer to those guilty of High Treason.

Thus by a juggling with the law Hind was set free from the sentence of death for the murder of Symson, but rearrested to be taken to Worcester for execution for the crime of High Treason of which he had been acquitted in London.

The execution was carried out with the added

barbarity of drawing and quartering, and it is not unpleasant to remember that at the Restoration exactly the same fate befell General Harrison at Charing Cross on the spot where the Charles statue stands.

Hind behaved with great calmness on the scaffold, declaring "that his principal depredations had been committed against the Republican party, and that he was sorry for nothing so much as not living to see his royal master restored."

Thus he died, a thief and a traitor according to the law, but a martyred hero in loyalist eyes. In obedience to the barbarity of his sentence, his limbs were set above the city gates and his head was put on a pike by the bridge over the Severn, looking towards Worcester Field on which he had fought so well.

To the followers of the Lost Cause he was a hero-martyr in whose memory many songs were sung. Nor was his head allowed to remain in the place of disgrace, for in the darkness of a stormy night a devoted adventurer climbed the pole and removing the sacred relic gave it honoured burial in one of the city churchyards.

TO THE MEMORY OF CAPTAIN HIND.

BY A POET OF HIS OWN TIME.

(As given in Johnson's *Lives of the Highwaymen*, probably reprinted from a broadsheet.)

Whenever Death attacks a throne,
Nature through all her parts must groan,
The mighty monarch to bemoan.

He must be wise, and just, and good,
Though not the state he understood,
Nor ever spared a subject's blood.

And shall no friendly poet find
A monumental verse for Hind ?—
In fortune less, as great in mind.

Hind made our wealth one common store,
He robbed the rich to feed the poor ;
What did immortal Cæsar more ?

Nay, 'twere not difficult to prove
That meaner views did Cæsar move :
His was ambition, Hind's was love.

Our English Hero sought no crown,
Nor that more pleasant bait, renown ;
But just to keep off Fortune's frown.

Yet when his country's cause invites,
See him assert a nation's rights !
A robber for his monarch fights.

If in due light his deeds we scan
As Nature points us out the plan,
Hind was an honourable man.

Honour, the virtue of the brave,
To Hind that turn of genius gave
Which made him scorn to be a slave.

Thus had his stars conspired to raise
His natal hour, this virtue's praise
Had shone with an uncommon blaze.

Some epoch had begun
From every action he had done—
A city built—a battle won.

If one's a subject, one at helm,
'Tis the same violence, says Anselm,
To rob a house or waste a realm.

Be henceforth, then, for ever joined
The names of Cæsar and of Hind—
In fortunes different—one in mind.

CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN STAFFORD

THE HIGHWAYMAN WHO PREACHED SERMONS

As clever Tom Clinch, while the rabble was bawling,
Rode stately through Holborn to die in his calling,
He stopped at the *George* for a bottle of sack
And promised to pay for it—when he came back!
His waistcoat and stockings and breeches were white,
His cap had a new cherry ribbon to tie't,
And the maids to the doors and the balconies ran,
And cried "Lackaday, what a proper young man."

Dean Swift.

AT the window of a little room in an old London house a woman sat weeping. The house was well, even splendidly, furnished according to the ideas of the times; her dress was of silk although drab in colour, and there was an austerity in the atmosphere which told the master of the house was of puritanical views, a man who thought any form of happiness was wicked, that to be lighthearted suggested a servant of the Devil. And this woman, a girl in years, was his wife, sold to him by one of the most barbarous laws which the British constitution had ever known. When the property of those men who had been

guilty of High Treason was sequestrated to the State, and it happened that a woman was the direct heir, she was allowed to keep her property —nominally—on condition she married a Republican citizen, such marriages being arranged without the formality of consulting the lady's wishes.

Such had been the fate of this poor girl. Coming of a loyalist family, her father and brothers had laid down their lives in the cause of the King, so their wealth had come to her, and the Parliamentarians taking possession of it and of her as well, had arranged her marriage with a city merchant far on in years, miserly, puritanical, and narrow-minded, with very pronounced views as to the wickedness of all who were loyal to King and Church. It is difficult for us to realise what a martyrdom that girl's life must have been, shut away amid uncongenial surroundings, forbidden to weep for the father and brothers she had loved, hearing on every side words that spoke in detestation of all she had been taught to believe good and noble.

An alien in an alien world she was, her heart breaking for the lack of one kind word, one sympathetic companion.

The door of the room in which she sat was opened, into it came her husband, dour, old,

repellent, while with him walked a man in the late 'thirties, handsome in appearance, polished in manner, gallant in bearing, for all he wore the close hair of the Roundheads and a suit of sober grey. No other garments or form of hairdressing would have been allowed in that dour household.

The girl dashed away her tears knowing she would be bitterly reproached by her husband for having given way to weakness, and heard the merchant presenting his companion to her; he was a Master Philip Stafford, she was told, a very godly gentleman who had come to act as what we should call secretary to the merchant. The latter's business had increased so much, thanks to his wife's dowry, that this further help was needed, and Stafford, a man of considerable education, was looked upon as a prize.

There is a language which is not spoken by the voice, and that language was eloquent in the glance Philip Stafford cast at the woman who shed bitter tears; it was told in the clasp of his hand as his fingers touched hers.

He went away then, but they remained under the same roof, and soon the barriers were broken down. To her he confessed the truth. He was a fugitive cavalier and flying from Worcester Field almost exactly as James Hind had done. He had come to London to see that shameful scene in

Tothill Fields when the English soldiers were sold into slavery.

Desperate and without friends, his fortune, which was considerable, sequestrated by the Government for his crime of High Treason, with a price upon his head, he was desperate indeed and somehow had heard of the city merchant who required a secretary. Perhaps it was Hind who helped him; at any rate some friend came forward in his need. He cut off his love-locks, he donned that suit of sad clothing, then with forged credentials presented himself at the merchant's house and forthwith was engaged, so excellently did he play his part. He played that part still, duping the old husband, though to the wife he was friend and confidante. To him she opened her aching heart, to him she told of the father and brothers who had died, and the fact that his own father had fallen at Naseby made another link between them. So dear they became to each other, so tender was their association that the sin to which it led might almost be forgiven, human nature being what it is. The tragedy of that poor woman's existence is so appalling it is difficult to judge her frailty aright.

Captain Johnson, who sees the worst side of everything, has little sympathy with either the woman or the fugitive, telling us that:

"By his insinuating address and engaging manners . . . he was soon admitted into the conversation (*i.e.* the society) of his master and mistress and in the most dexterous manner imitated the religious phrases and sentiments of the Republican party. . . . But he soon employed language of a different kind to his mistress, alienated her affections from her lawful husband, and so grossly imposed upon him that when he would sometimes unexpectedly find them alone, and in close conversation, he would conclude that religion was the subject of their earnest conversation. Under the disguise of religion and emboldened by the credulity of the old husband, Stafford remained with increasing favour in that family until an heir was born to enjoy the fortune of the old Republican."

Whether the suspicions of the husband were tardily roused, or whether the birth of the child brought about a change in the mother's feelings, we do not know, but suddenly Stafford determined to leave.

Johnson says there was a jewel robbery carried out by a Frenchman named Tom Pretty [*sic*] in which Stafford was implicated, though as the charge was never brought against him it is

difficult to see how Johnson or anyone else can have known of it. More probably there was a robbery of which Stafford was innocent, but suspicion pointed to him, and knowing any enquiries would be fatal, he had to fly. Or there may have been another and far more chivalrous reason for his going. The child was coming, he realised that it would bring comfort to its young mother's breaking heart and his own stay under the roof must cause complications, perhaps even suspicion, thus for her sake, far more than for his own, he had to leave her. And go he did, bidding her an impassioned farewell, leaving only those memories which might comfort her in the time to come. And so she, poor guilty woman, fades out of the story.

Then he became a highwayman and seems to have carried out his robberies after a method of his own. No gallant, dashing, romantic knight of the road this, leaping from shelter of copse or thicket with mask on face and pistol in hand to bid the traveller to "Stand and Deliver." Instead, in sober garments he rode at an ambling trot looking out for travellers of the most sedate sort who were likely to have well-filled purses.

His victim marked down, his procedure was the same always. The two fell into conversation, Stafford making a point of asking the religious

and political views of his companion, and supposing the latter confessed he had loyalist leanings and was a good Churchman, they rode on in perfect amity and nothing untoward befell. On the other hand, if the traveller declared himself a Parliamentarian, the talk would veer to the wickedness of highway robbers and the best means to circumvent them, till in a burst of confidence the traveller might explain how he had concealed his gold in his boots or in the stuffing of his saddle or wherever his chosen hiding-place might be. After that the awakening came quickly. At the first lonely spot Stafford showed himself in his true colours and the gold changed hands.

All of which is very sordid, but at least it proves Stafford spoke the truth when he came to die and declared he had never robbed anyone who was not an avowed enemy of the King, therefore fair game according to his lights.

Apparently he was not attracted to the perils and adventures of the road, since no act of reckless dare-devilry is told against him. He robbed only till he had sufficient money for his needs, then, leaving the part of the country where he was known, settled in a Yorkshire village as a gentleman of small fortune who had chosen to live in retirement.

Probably from the need to conceal his identity, which was ever present, he continued to wear Puritan garments and to speak with the Puritan drawl, and of course had to attend the local chapel . . . there was no staying away from a place of worship on Sunday when officers of the law had the right to go round and collect all such men as were "Sabbath-breakers" and drive them into church as a flock of sheep. Therefore Stafford was not so great a hypocrite as appears when we are told he seemed so devoted a worshipper at the conventicle that when the minister died the congregation voted him to his place, with the income of forty pounds a year.

The ex-highwayman accepted the honour: "With seeming reluctance," says Johnson, though the reluctance might have been real enough. He became minister in charge of the chapel and preached so eloquently that his fame spread far and wide and people came from miles to listen to his sermons.

Quite probably he would have ended his days in this odour of sanctity, but for the fact that he possessed extraordinary attraction for women, which is the inheritance of the born adventurer. Scandal arose concerning him and a lady member of his congregation, with the result he had to leave his retreat and begin his adventures again.

Whether he continued as a highwayman or whether he went back to his own west-country intending to settle there, is not clear, but he was in the neighbourhood of Reading where he fell in with a wealthy farmer riding home from market with a bag of gold, since he had done a good deal with his wheat. He may have been a successful grower of corn, but he was an extraordinarily foolish man, for he boasted of his gold to this stranger he had met by the way, and the temptation proved too strong for the ex-preacher.

His pistol was drawn from its holster, and the bag of gold changed hands.

Unfortunately for himself Stafford had only just ridden away with this booty when two gentlemen, well-mounted and well-armed, appeared from a side road and to them the farmer told of his loss. At once they set off in pursuit and within an hour overtook Stafford. Apparently he had no idea they were after him, and their attack was well concerted and carried out. Before he could realise what was happening, they had flung him from the saddle, his horse galloped away with his pistols in the holsters, and he lay half stunned upon the dusty road.

An easy capture, the gentlemen conveyed him to the nearest Justice of the Peace by whom he

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FOR KING AND COUNTRY

From a painting by Sir John Gilbert

The call James Hind obeyed. (See page 96)

was committed to Reading gaol to await his trial. At the Assizes he was found guilty and sentenced to death.

> "During his confinement (while waiting his execution) he lived in a sumptuous manner, and was visited by many of his own profession who formed a plan for his deliverance and agreed to make him their leader. The matter, however, transpiring the day of execution was changed, and Stafford was miserably disappointed."

Even to the last he had hope of rescue, expecting his friends would rush the gallows and carry him out of the fatal cart. He left the prison in debonair fashion, wearing "a fine, light-coloured suit of clothes, with a nosegay at his breast," and appeared perfectly unconcerned.

> "Arrived at the place of execution he looked wistfully around and endeavoured to prolong the time. But when he saw none were coming to his assistance he trembled and turned pale."

His last act was to give the sheriff a paper containing a short account of his adventures, dwelling on the losses he had sustained in the cause of the King and declaring he was justified in all he had done, according to his lights.

CHAPTER VI

CLAUDE DUVAL

THE HERO OF THE WAYSIDE DANCE

Here lies Du Vall! Reader, if male thou art,
Look to thy purse, if female, to thy heart,
Much havoc he hath made of both. For all
Men he made stand and women he made fall.

The second Conqueror of the Norman race,
Knights to his armes did yield and ladies to his face,
Old Tyburn's glory, England's blustering chief,
Du Vall, the ladies' joy! Du Vall, the ladies' grief.

Duval's Epitaph on his Grave in St. Paul's, Covent Garden. (*Author Unknown.*)

MY lady the Duchess of Richmond was in bitter tears, my lord the Duke was furiously angry. Certain jewels on which he set great value had disappeared from his wife's possession, and roundly he was swearing that the thief must be Claude Duval, the French footman who had disappeared in mysterious fashion recently. In distracted words, my lady, wildly hysterical, at one moment declared that of course Duval was guilty, he must have taken the jewels without her knowledge, and in the next protested he was innocent,

and in any case begged that her husband would not attempt to drag the man to justice.

All of which increased very ugly suspicions in the Duke's mind, knowing as he did that his wife was not noted for her virtue. Her beauty appears to have been her chief asset, and of that there is no doubt. We have only to look at her portrait to realise her stately grace, and that portrait is even more familiar to us than it was to the people of her own time, since she was the original model for that figure of Britannia which appears on our coins.

His Grace the Duke had his way. He gave information to the constable, and a bill was issued setting forth the names of certain menservants who had robbed their masters, that of Claude Duval heading the list. And doubtless my lady shed more tears in secret and was beset with dread lest the thief should be brought to justice, in spite of the fact she must have wanted her jewels returned. But the question remained whether Duval had actually stolen without her knowledge, or if, as seems more probable, he had extorted the jewels from her by blackmail, having been her lover and now threatening to betray her to her husband—a proceeding of which he was quite probably guilty considering all we know of his story.

In the British Museum there is a book which purports to be the Memoirs of Claude Duval, written by himself and published a few months after his death. It is more than doubtful if he wrote a word of it, but on the title-page the author—or editor—sets down that the work is published " as a reflection on the too-great fondness of English ladies for French footmen, which at that time of day was too common a complaint."

In that very ugly paragraph lies the secret of Duval's rise to fame.

He had been born at Dumfort in Normandy in 1643, where Johnson says his father was a miller, though the anonymous author of *Lives of Noted Highwaymen*, a somewhat older work, gives the elder Duval as a shoemaker. The lad came of respectable people and remained at school until he was thirteen, which was late as educational ideas ran in the seventeenth century.

When he started to earn his living it was as a stable assistant at a flourishing coaching inn near his home. Presently he was sent to Paris in charge of horses, and the gay city so appealed to him he decided to remain.

At that time a large number of the English nobility were exiled in France, since Cromwell ruled England, and among these were the Duke and Duchess of Richmond.

My lady saw the slender dark-eyed boy and was attracted by him. Thanks to her patronage he was received into her household, he became one of her personal attendants, he accompanied the Duke and Duchess back to England on the restoration of the King, and it was soon afterwards that he absconded, taking those jewels with him.

In spite of all the efforts of the Duke, Duval was never arrested on that particular charge. Already he had made many friends, a gang of dashing thieves waited to welcome him as a leader, and in the north of London he found a shelter in an old house where he gathered his chosen spirits around him.

Until a century or so ago the remains of that house stood at the corner of what is now Parkhurst Road, where it joins Holloway Road, opposite the junction of Seven Sisters Road, while Parkhurst Road was called Duval's Lane for many generations, though older maps showed it as "Devil's Lane," perhaps a distinction without a difference. In these days, when the neighbourhood is a wilderness of bricks and mortar with rows of noted shops, a centre for clanging tramcars and hooting motor-buses, it is difficult to realise that so short a time ago it was a stretch of desolate wood and lonely fields

across which the Great North Road—first metalled by Roman cohorts—wound its way. Yet long after the days of Duval travellers dreaded that part of the highway because of its desolation and dangers.

From first to last Duval may have been described as "a Squire of Dames"—a man utterly without moral sense who owed his safety and good-fortune, such as it was, entirely to his influence over women.

The most popular story of his gallantry is that legend of the dance which had been celebrated by a painting of Frith's, though Mr. H. B. Marriott Watson threw doubts upon the story, adding: "If it ever took place I'll swear it never ended there." Be that as it may, it has been repeated so many times it is almost impossible to doubt there is some truth in it.

According to *Noted Highwaymen* the lady and her husband were approaching London after a long journey when the coachman gave warning that a masked man on horseback was waiting by the side of the road. There could be no doubt as to the horseman's intentions, but the lady took out her flageolet—then very fashionable and considered a particularly feminine instrument—and began to play, apparently with the idea that if they showed no fear the

highwayman would conclude they had little to lose and might let them pass.

In this she failed. Duval heard the sweet music, he caught a glimpse of the pretty face of the musician, and pulling his own flageolet out of his pocket, took up the air.

Thus playing he rode to the door of the coach, which the driver pulled up obediently to his signal; few servants attempted to disobey the highwayman, knowing the rewards which would await them in the one case or the other.

The lady had courage as well as beauty and skill, for she went on with her music as if nothing had happened until Duval spoke. The rest shall be told in Johnson's words: -

> "'Sir,' said Duval to the knight. 'Your lady plays excellently, and I make no doubt she dances as well. Will you step out of the carriage and let me have the honour to dance a bourant with her upon the heath?'
>
> "'I dare not deny anything, sir,' the knight replied, 'to a gentleman of your quality and good behaviour. You seem a man of quality and your request is perfectly reasonable.'
>
> "Immediately the footman opens the door and the knight comes out. Duval leaps lightly from his horse and hands the lady down. It

was surprising to see how gracefully he moved upon the grass, scarcely a dancing-master in London but would have been proud to show such agility in a pair of pumps as Duval showed in a pair of French riding-boots.

"As soon as the dance was over he handed the lady into the coach, but just as the knight was stepping in:

"'Sir,' says he, 'you forget to pay for the music.'

"His Worship replied that he never forgot such things and instantly put his hand under the seat of the coach, pulled out a hundred pounds in a bag which he gave to Duval, who received it with very good grace and courteously answered:—

"'Sir, you are liberal and shall have no cause to regret your generosity; this hundred pounds, given so generously, is better ten times than a sum taken by force. Your noble behaviour has excused you the other three hundred pounds which you have in the coach with you.'

"After which he gave him his word that he might pass undisturbed if he met any others of his crew, and wished them a good journey."

Another story shows Duval in a still more kindly aspect. He was keeping watch while one

of his gang robbed a coach, and thinking there was unnecessary delay rode up to find out what was afoot. It appeared amongst other property the highwayman had taken a baby's "silver sucking bottle," and as that meant the little one would have to go hungry the rest of the journey, the mother was distractedly begging the bottle might be returned.

Instantly Duval ordered the man to give up the baby's property.

"Sirrah, can't you behave like a gentleman and raise a contribution without stripping people?" he demanded. "But perhaps you had some occasion for the sucking bottle, since by your actions I might imagine you were hardly weaned."

The baby's property returned, Duval "in a courteous manner" took his leave.

All this time he was carrying on what may euphemistically be called love-affairs with many great ladies—at least if those Memoirs are to be believed. Says Johnson:

> "He carried on war with rich travellers and fair ladies, and proudly boasted he was equally successful with both—he avowed his fortune was as good as that of Marlborough who never laid siege to a city that he did not take. His adventures of gallantry, however, are of such

a nature that decorum forbids their recital, and certainly it is no great compliment to the delicacy or taste of him who first recorded them ! "

Rather on a different plane is the story told in *Noted Highwaymen* of an adventure at Beaconsfield, whither Duval had ridden on a market day. Amongst the crowd in the market-place was a particularly prosperous farmer who had made several good deals, and presently Duval followed him to the *Crown Inn* where men and girls were dancing in a large room. Looking in at the door, Duval saw the farmer was enjoying the sight of the dancing couples and had put his bag of money down on the bench beside him, keeping his hand upon it all the time. Only some very special reason would make him go away and leave that money bag behind, but Duval's quick brain formed a plan to bring the desired result about.

The room was large and badly lighted, also it had an immense chimney with a great hood over it, as was common in the country.

Having seen this Duval went into the stable-yard and made friends with the ostler. With the help of that personage he secured a very large dog and a cow's hide, complete with the horns. Into the hide the dog was sewn, the

horns being adjusted on his head, then, with the dog, the ostler climbed to the roof of the inn and by the help of a rope lowered the animal down the chimney—most sincerely it is to be hoped there was no fire.

By that time Duval was back in the room watching the dancers also. Merriment ran high when a curious noise was heard, and out of the hooded fireplace leaped a grotesquely terrible figure, black with soot, uttering weird bays of excitement, living eyes glaring from the horned head as with ungainly movements it bounded amongst the dancers.

The effects of Puritanism lingered. Every one of those rustic dancers had a half-acknowledged sense of guilt in daring to enjoy the revels which had been unlawful a year or so before, and the belief in the existence of a personal Devil was universal. The sight of this apparition was confirmation. In a panic, dancers and spectators rushed to the doors, the rich farmer amongst them, and his bag of gold was left behind.

With it Duval walked out of the inn before the truth of the " Devil's " appearance could be known, and was well away from Beaconsfield ere the loss was discovered.

So insistent—and successful—were his rob-

beries, that extra efforts to secure his capture were made, with the result that he had to fly to France and remained in Paris for several months.

During his stay there is a story of his swindling an alchemist who was searching for the Philosopher's Stone with its power of transmuting base metals into gold. In the character of a fellow-seeker after knowledge, Duval presented himself at the laboratory and asked to be allowed to use the crucibles for a certain preparation of his own. On this favour being granted he stirred the molten metal with a hollow stick into which an ounce and a half of real gold had been introduced. The gold slipped from the hollow into the crucible and remaining there was found by the alchemist, who was so delighted with his new friend's knowledge that he made him free of his study, and even let him see the hiding-place in which he kept his treasures.

Needless to add that with these treasures Duval made off in due course.

That story is told by practically every one of his biographers, but it is most improbable. Apart from other arguments against it, the alchemist was a man of science; how then did Duval—at the best half-educated—make his jargon pass for knowledge? And how did he obtain sufficient experience to handle the crucibles

as one who was at home in a laboratory? There may have been another adventurer who carried out such a fraud, quite probably it has been done many times, but that Claude Duval was guilty in this particular instance must be doubted most strongly.

After the absence of a few months he was back in England, and for a time made his home in Bishopsgate—during his lifetime there was a rumour that he was the son of a cook in "Smock Alley Without, near Bishopsgate," and though it was contradicted after his death and his native place proved to have been Dumfort, it may be suggested that his parents had followed his fortunes to England and taken up their abode in the alley. The rage for French cookery, which had followed the return of the exiles, was enough to get any Frenchman or woman employment as cook in London.

Unfortunately for himself Duval carried out an important robbery with such success that he celebrated it by entertaining his friends to a banquet at an inn called *The Hole* or *The Hole in the Wall* in Chandos Street. After the feast, when he had eaten and drunk too much, he fell asleep, and as he lay insensible was betrayed to the constables.

He woke to find himself in Newgate.

On January 17th, 1669-70, he stood his trial at the Old Bailey, and being proved guilty was sentenced to death.

The four days which elapsed between his sentence and execution witnessed the most extraordinary scenes. Ladies of the highest rank sought audience of the King to beg the highwayman's life might be spared, and indeed so insistent were they that Charles was on the eve of yielding, but Judge Morton, who had passed sentence and was called the terror of the highwaymen, threatened to resign if that were done.

Titus Oates set it on record that "divers great personages of the feminine sex, on their knees made supplication for that insipid highwayman" —the adjective is hardly the one that might have been expected.

On January 21st he was taken to Tyburn, very gallant to the last. He made no speech on the scaffold, probably not being allowed to do so, for after his death a paper "written in a very fair hand" was found in his pocket, and was believed to contain the speech with which he intended to address the crowd. An impudent, witty, ribald production it was, of which the first paragraph may be quoted :—

> "I should be very ungrateful, which amongst persons of honour is a greater crime than that

for which I die, not to acknowledge my obligations to the fair English ladies who have not abandoned me in my distress. From experience of your great love I know that many of you desire to die with me . . . "

The rest of the document must be left unrepeated.

After his death his body was carried to the *Tangier's Tavern* in St. Giles, where it lay in state on a velvet-draped bier with candles at the head, and mutes in attendance. So great was the crowd thronging to see him that Judge Morton interfered again, and constables were sent to stop the unpleasant exhibition. On that a funeral procession was formed, and followed by bareheaded men and weeping women—there was a great company of the latter—Duval was borne to St. Paul's in Covent Garden where his grave had been dug in the centre aisle, one of the first graves there since the church was newly built.

Very splendid was his funeral ceremony with its crowd of mourners and accompanying flambeaux, and on the stone which covered his grave were carved the lines given at the head of this chapter—their author is unknown.

CHAPTER VII

JONATHAN WILD, BLUESKIN AND JACK SHEPPARD

THE MASTER CRIMINAL AND HIS TWO MOST FAMOUS PUPILS

"A Lawyer's is an honest employment, so is mine. Like me too, he acts in a double capacity, both against rogues and for 'em, and 'tis but fitting we should protect and encourage cheats since we both live by 'em."—*The Beggar's Opera.*

THE very doubtful honour of being the birthplace of Jonathan Wild belongs to Wolverhampton, where he first saw the light in 1682. We are assured his parents were of "decent character and station," that they were careful to place him at a good school, afterwards apprenticing him to a buckle-maker in Birmingham. When "out of his time" he started in business for himself near his old master, marrying a highly respectable girl, but within a year had tired of his surroundings or fallen into trouble of which no account survives. At any rate, he fled to London, taking with him what money he possessed, and leaving his wife and her new-born child destitute.

In London he found work, but his earnings did not equal his expenditures, and before long he was arrested for debt, unjustly as he declared, and it is illuminating that he attributed all his subsequent career to the lessons he learned from fellow-prisoners.

For four years he remained in that prison, when the doors opened to admit a woman whose name was Mary Milliner and whose reputation cannot be described as doubtful. From the first Wild was attracted to her and she to him, and before long he became her confidant. She told him she was an expert pickpocket and from her he learnt more secrets of the London criminal world, and within a few days she was known as "Mrs. Wild" in the prison where such partnerships were the rule rather than the exception. When she was able to regain her freedom, thanks to influential friends, she parted from her paramour with reluctance, assuring him, however, that he should join her before long.

At least it is to her credit that she was as good as her word. She obtained money to pay his debts, and when he was at liberty the pair started in a small public-house in an alley leading off Cripplegate, the resort of thieves and outcasts of the lowest order.

At first Wild acted as "fence," or the receiver

of stolen goods, but about that time the Legislature awoke to the crying scandal by which a thief was hanged while the receiver escaped. In consequence a new law was passed under which anyone convicted of receiving goods knowing them to have been stolen was liable to fourteen years' transportation for it. Such criminals received a bad check until Wild discovered there was no enactment against the receiver who restored the stolen goods to their rightful owners.

To quote from *Remarkable Trials* which professes to give Wild's own words :

> " . . . he therefore called a meeting of thieves, and observed that if they carried their booties to such of the pawnbrokers as were known to be not much affected by scruples of conscience, they would scarcely receive on the property one-fourth of the real value, and that if they were offered to strangers either for sale or by way of deposit, it was a chance of ten to one but the parties offering were rendered amenable to the laws. The most industrious thieves, he said, were scarcely able to obtain a livelihood and must either submit to be half starved or live in great and continual danger of Tyburn.
>
> " He had, however, devised a plan for removing the inconveniences which existed,

which he would act upon most honourably, provided they would follow his advice and behave towards him with equal honesty. He proposed, therefore, that when they made prize of anything, they should deliver it to him, instead of carrying it to the pawnbroker, saying that he would restore the goods to the owners, by which means greater sums might be raised, while the thieves would remain perfectly secure from prosecution.

"This proposition was one which met with universal approbation, and the plan was immediately carried into effect, convenient places being established as the depositories of the stolen goods.

"The plan thus concerted it became the business of Wild to apply to persons who had been robbed, and he, pretending to be greatly concerned at their misfortunes, would say that some suspected goods had been stopped by a friend of his who was a broker who would be willing to give them up. And he failed not to throw out a hint that the broker deserved some reward for his disinterested conduct."

So well did he flourish in this new walk of life that he became known far and wide for his skill in tracing stolen property, and people who had

been robbed would go to him without delay, to bargain as to what they would pay in return for the recovery of their property. Boldly he opened an office for this purpose and his "turn over" as the result of his many transactions reached a very large sum yearly.

For a considerable time he led this double life, on one hand posing as a law-abiding citizen who did his best to right wrongs, and on the other, associating with criminals, at once their leader and instigator in every conceivable crime. Captain Johnson very rightly describes him as "Director-General of the United Forces of Highwaymen, Housebreakers, Footpads, Pick-pockets and Private Thieves."

To his other misdeeds he added that of conducting an academy where boys were trained to crime, and had his touts and spies everywhere to discover possible thieves and get them entangled in his net. Once there, there was no escape. Let a wretched criminal try to abandon his associates, and Wild saw to it that he was hauled to the gallows or the hulks without delay.

In the year 1715 he and his Mary Milliner had a quarrel, when in his fury he attacked her so brutally that he cut off one of her ears. Directly afterwards he repented, with tears he assured her of his undying devotion, but she had too

much good sense to listen, with the result they parted, though he allowed her an income as long as she lived.

Giving up the inn he went to the Old Bailey to reside in the house of a Mrs. Seagoe, and here enlarged his business further. Realising there were many thieves who did not bring him their booty he opened a pawnbroker's shop in Newtoner Lane, of which establishment he gave the charge to a man named Abraham Mendez, who served him a great deal more faithfully than he deserved. Also he fell in with "Mr. Hitchin," who had made himself into what might be termed a "watch committee," patrolling the streets at night in search of dissolute women and bad characters of all descriptions. Soon Wild became his assistant in this virtuous work.

From Temple Bar to the Minories the precious pair patrolled London, frequently making arrests but always allowing their captives to escape if they could pay sufficiently well. Occasionally they would search houses on one pretext or another, and were not above coming away with articles of value in their pockets.

After a time the two quarrelled, on which Hitchin wrote a pamphlet accusing Wild, and Wild retorted with another publication laying charges on Hitchin, who was suspended from his

office of Marshal by the Lord Mayor. He tried to heal the breach with his late friend without success, and the latter—who had a good deal of literary ability—wrote another work concerning the Marshal's crimes.

These pamphlets are of great interest as giving a picture of the underworld of the times, but their details are too sordid and unsavoury to bear quotation.

The end of the squabble was that the ex-Marshal was fined twenty pounds and put in the pillory, after which he appears no more in the story of Jonathan Wild.

As a specimen of the methods which Wild employed amongst his clients the story of Arnold Powel may be told.

Powel was a particularly hardened scoundrel who, having committed very many robberies, was arrested for one at Golden Square where he had broken into a house and carried off a large amount of booty. To him in Newgate came Jonathan Wild, offering to produce evidence that would save him from the gallows if he would pay a certain sum. However, Powel knew perfectly well that the evidence against him was faulty, so refused to have anything to do with Wild in language that was more plain than complimentary.

Out of the prison Wild went, swearing to remember the insults.

Powel was brought to trial, but discharged for lack of evidence, on which Wild visited a Mr. Eastlick who lived in a large house " overlooking Fleet Ditch," which means somewhere in the present Farringdon Street or in New Bridge Street. Mr. Eastlick had suffered from a burglary some time before, but had been unable to gain any clue to the thief. Now Wild brought forward evidence which inculpated Powel, who was re-arrested, and this time there was every chance of his conviction.

Again Wild went to him in Newgate, and knowing himself beaten the prisoner agreed to pay the sum demanded, and on which Wild saw Mr. Eastlick again and told him the trial would not come on till the end of the Sessions so he need not attend the court till the last day.

That simple expedient kept the prosecutor out of the way, and it was easy for Wild to arrange with the officials of the court to have Powel brought up as one of the first cases to be tried. As no prosecutor was present it was hoped he would be set at liberty, but here the plan went wrong. Instead of freeing the prisoner the judge remanded him to the next Sessions; when

that time came Mr. Eastlick prosecuted and the conduct of Wild was brought to light.

Somehow he escaped with a severe reprimand, while the unfortunate Powel was duly hanged at Tyburn.

However, the attention of the authorities had been directed to Wild, possibly before his execution Powel had supplied them with details, and in the result a law was passed specially directed against the master criminal, enacting that " every person who restored stolen goods without prosecuting the criminal should be deemed guilty of a capital offence."

This law spoilt Wild's business, but did not end his activities. He proclaimed himself a " thief taker," broadcasting the number of the many unfortunate wretches he had betrayed, but he remained the confederate of thieves. To him they continued to bring their booty, only now, instead of restoring it to their owners, he found a market across the sea. He purchased a sloop, set a scoundrel named Johnson in command, and with the help of an ex-thief as his agent abroad established regular markets for the disposal of his wares at Ostend, Bruges, Brussels and Ghent.

One of the most promising pupils at Wild's academy was an unhappy lad who was fore-

THE TRAVELLER ATTACKED

From an old print after Egerton, now in the British Museum

doomed to the gallows from his birth. Of unknown parentage, Joseph Blake was born in the Mint, the herding-place of criminals of all degree. An ancient charter made the streets and alleys within its boundaries a sanctuary for debtors, with the result that no law officer dared enter to make an arrest. Naturally not debtors alone, but thieves and murderers also, found refuge within that most unsavoury locality.

Joseph Blake—called Blueskin from the darkness of his complexion—was born somewhere about the year 1700, at a period when the Mint was at the height—or the depths—of its depravity. He graduated early in the school of crime, and before he was fifteen boasted he had been in every prison in London.

Jonathan Wild enrolled Blueskin as one of his gang. He showed him many marks of personal favour, and sent him out again and again on the look out for other lads whom he might decoy into the net.

Always keen on carrying out the business with which he was entrusted, Blueskin was attracted by a very small young man who was drinking in the *Black Lion Tavern* in Drury Lane with a very big woman. The latter's reputation Blueskin knew already. Her name was Elizabeth Lyons, commonly known as Edgeworth Bess from her

birth town, and going to speak to her Blueskin was introduced to her small companion John Sheppard, apprenticed to a carpenter of Wych Street just round the corner. Blueskin, already trained to recognise the budding criminal, looked at his new acquaintance with approval, seeing the rat-like face, the cunning brow, the deep-set eyes, and Jack Sheppard realising that any friend of Edgeworth Bess might be trusted, explained he had done some housebreaking already, under the tuition of a notorious lady called Mrs. Maggot, on which Blueskin became eloquent, describing the skill of his master Jonathan Wild and the money that was to be made by anyone who would thieve under his direction.

That meeting in the tavern was to have important consequences for the two. Jack Sheppard remained in honest work a very short time longer, though even then he appears to have committed occasional robberies at night, squandering the money so obtained on Edgeworth Bess and Mrs. Maggot. Before long, however, he absconded, and being taken by Blueskin to Jonathan Wild's headquarters was duly enrolled as a member of the gang.

For a considerable time they worked together, and always Jonathan Wild was flourishing like

the green bay tree. Jack Sheppard was one of the most active of the gang, bringing him a large amount of booty. Again and again the little man was arrested, but so skilfully did he break prison, thanks to his small size and great agility, it seemed the prison cell had not been built nor the irons forged which would hold him. He brought his brother Tom Sheppard into the gang also, and we are told that the two enjoyed the " confidence and esteem " of Wild.

A typical—and quite authentic—adventure of Sheppard's was that which led to his first escape from Newgate.

With an associate named Benson, another of the Wild gang, he was lurking in Leicester Fields (now partly covered by Leicester Square) when a gentleman approached. Benson attracted the stranger's attention while little Jack crept up to steal his watch, but bungled in his work, which was unusual, so the gentleman gave the alarm and help was at hand.

That night Sheppard was lodged in the Round House at St. Giles, the place of temporary detention for prisoners, equivalent to our police station, and there was visited by Edgeworth Bess who declared herself his wife, so was allowed to share his imprisonment by the complacency of the constable.

The following morning he was brought before the magistrate, but as it was believed there were other charges against him he was committed to the New Prison—at Newgate—and Edgeworth Bess went with him. At Newgate they were given a room apart from the other prisoners—they paid well for this—and there received several visitors, including Blueskin who brought a loaf of bread, in the middle of which was a coil of rope, and a pie containing a couple of files.

That night when all within the prison were supposed to be asleep, Sheppard used the files to cut away his irons—Bess was not fettered since she was not a prisoner. The window of their room was glassless but protected with iron bars; these had to be filed also, after which came the discovery that the drop to the ground was a good twenty-five feet and the rope was too short—another account says Blueskin neglected to supply the rope, so they had to tear up the blankets from their bed.

Bess removed most of her clothes to enable her to climb through the narrow window, flinging her garments into the yard before she made the descent. Hand over hand she went down the rope and dropped to the ground in safety, Jack following with ease.

They were in the prison yard where the walls

were twenty-two feet high and surmounted by an iron frieze. To climb was impossible, but in stealth and darkness the adventurers made their way to the gates which they managed to scale, and so gained freedom.

Somewhere about the same time Blueskin was arrested with several other confederates, but saved his life by turning King's Evidence, with the result the others were hanged while he had every hope of escape. However, his conduct had been so bad he was told he could be released only on the sureties of two highly respectable citizens, and these not being forthcoming he remained in the Wood Street Compter, or lock-up, for a long time, during which Wild allowed him the sum of three and sixpence a week to buy food. Finally, Wild found two respectable gardeners to become sureties and the prisoner was set free to rejoin Jack Sheppard.

Soon the two were dissatisfied with the payment Wild had given them and determined to carry out the next robbery "on their own," though they must have been sufficiently aware of Wild's power to realise the danger of such a course. A man named Field, perhaps the worst scoundrel of the gang, promised he would find a customer for stolen goods and get a better price than Wild would give, whereupon they planned to "house-

break," as the phrase went, at the house of a Mr. William Kneebone, a linendraper in St. Clement's Churchyard, having first become tenants of an empty stable in Westminster, arranging that whatever they stole should be taken there for Field's inspection. That settled, they went to work.

In the dead of night they cut away the bars of the cellar grating of Mr. Kneebone's house, and dropping into the cellar found their way blocked by a door bolted and padlocked on the other side. Expert housebreaker as he was, Jack Sheppard made light of the barrier—how we do not know—and gaining the shop carried away "one hundred and eight yards of woollen cloth, valued thirty-six pounds, and other property." With this he and Blueskin made their way to the stable where Field waited. Certainly he kept his word that he would find a customer—he took the cloth straight to Wild.

Almost directly after Field had told his story, Mr. Kneebone presented himself to Wild explaining how he had been robbed, and begging Wild's help in the taking of the thieves—help that was given willingly. A constable was summoned, and with him went Wild and Mr. Kneebone and one of Wild's men who rejoiced in the rather strange name of Quilt Arnold.

To Blueskin's lodgings they hastened, where the wretched man tried to barricade his door, but Quilt Arnold, who was a giant, broke it open and the arrest was made. Blueskin lived in the slums about Drury Lane; from it the way to Newgate lay past Mr. Kneebone's house, and when that came in sight Wild said to him, "Is that the ken?" meaning, "Is that the scene of the robbery?"

Blueskin answered with a groan: "Say no more of that, Mr. Wild, for I know I'm a dead man. But what I fear is that I shall afterwards be carried to Surgeons' Hall and anatomised."

Wild hastened to reassure him, telling him not to be afraid as he would see he had a good coffin, and also let him have some devout books to read while he was in prison.

The touch about devout books is the height of irony, but a lack of the sense of humour is apparent throughout the thief-taker's career.

Sheppard was implicated in the robbery also, but managed to escape arrest and was in hiding, thus only Blueskin and Field appeared at the Old Bailey.

Somewhere within the court they came face to face with Wild, who was waiting to give evidence against them. On seeing him Blueskin leaped forward, an open clasp-knife in his hand,

and struck the thief-taker in the throat. Warders rushed to interfere and the blow was so deflected the injury was comparatively slight, but it was sufficient to prevent Wild going into the witness-box that day.

Without his evidence Blueskin was convicted though Field escaped, and when the sentence of death had been pronounced, Blueskin shouted his denunciation of Wild from the dock, telling the story of that promise of a coffin and of " good books to read."

For the few days that remained the wretched creature gave his thought to plans for escape, but finding all were useless did his best to drink himself into a state of insensibility before the end.

On November 11th, 1723, he died at Tyburn, but not until the following August was Sheppard brought to trial and found guilty. The night before that fixed for his execution he was visited for a farewell supper by his old flame Edgeworth Bess, accompanied by Mrs. Maggot who was a gigantic creature, larger even than Bess.

Both ladies were in excellent spirits, and Bess, being well supplied with money, took care the gaolers should drink her health. When the time for the visitors to leave came it was the rule that an inner iron gate was locked upon the prisoners,

which was done, but Bess so enjoyed the company of the prison staff that she went back to the room where they were drinking at her expense, and kept them in roars of laughter till they forgot Mrs. Maggot or the fact that the outer gates were open.

Right at the top of the inner gates was a broken bar, and to that Jack Sheppard climbed. The opening was so small hardly a child could pass it, but the little man managed to squirm through with the help of the athletic Mrs. Maggot who hauled with a good will. Once he was on the other side she tucked him under her voluminous cloak, and both were out of the prison before Bess and the gaolers had ended their joke.

Tradition, used by Harrison Ainsworth in his novel, says Sheppard escaped from prison many more times, but that may be doubted, since it was on August 30th he performed this exploit, but was rearrested on November 16th in the same year.

He died very dreadfully at Tyburn and was buried in the church of St. Martin in the Fields.

With the ending of the lives of Jack Sheppard and Blueskin the career of Jonathan Wild drew near its foregone conclusion.

Apparently he had kept up some communication with his family at Wolverhampton, and

nineteen years after he had come to London was joined by his son whom he had not seen since babyhood. We are told the young man possessed "a very violent temper," but since he had been brought up in a highly respectable circle and that temper broke out against his father, it may be forgiven. There is no proof he joined Jonathan in his career of crime; indeed, after the latter's death he went to the West Indies where he did well.

A few weeks after the arrival of this young son the end came.

Johnson, the skipper of Wild's sloop, had not been contented to carry stolen goods to Holland. Instead of returning with his ship in ballast, he reached his home port laden deep with lace and wine and brandy—all contraband. Then came a voyage when the skipper quarrelled with the mate over five pieces of lace he said the mate had stolen. In his indignation the latter went to the authorities, and in Wild's language "blew the gaff."

That was the beginning of the end. Somehow Wild escaped implication, and Johnson was set free on payment of a fine, but the authorities were on the alert and a man named Edward, keeper of a house in Long Lane, the resort of thieves, turned King's Evidence.

On Friday, February 15th, 1725, Wild was arrested and a week later was charged on eleven counts of which the most important may be quoted.

I. That for many years past he had been a confederate with great numbers of highwaymen, pickpockets, housebreakers, shoplifters, and other thieves.

II. That he had formed a kind of corporation of thieves of which he was the head or director; and that notwithstanding his pretended services in detecting and prosecuting offenders, he procured only such to be hanged as concealed their booty or declined to share it with him.

. . . . . .

VIII. That he had under his care and direction several warehouses for receiving and concealing stolen goods; and also a ship for carrying off jewels and watches and other valuable goods to Holland where he had a superannuated thief for his factor.

IX. That he kept in pay several artists to make alterations and transform

watches, seals, snuff-boxes, rings, and other valuable things that they might not be known.

. . . . . .

XI. And lastly it appeared that he had often sold human blood by procuring false evidence to swear persons into facts of which they were not guilty.

On May 15th, 1725, he stood his trial at the Old Bailey, but to the last he pinned his faith on his literary ability and flooded the court—particularly the jury-box—with handbills containing a list of criminals he had betrayed, thirty-five highway robbers, twenty-two house-breakers, and ten who had returned illegally from transportation. The handbill is a wonderful document, and has a strong human interest in the fact that the man so evidently believed himself justified in his treachery.

The verdict was Guilty—it could hardly have been anything else—and Jonathan Wild was sentenced to meet the death to which he had brought others.

During the few days which elapsed before his execution he clung to the hope that "some of the dukes, earls, and other persons of high importance," for whom he had recovered stolen

property, would use their influence on his behalf, but finding none was inclined to stir, he broke into bitter invective against Fate, declaring that his efforts on behalf of the law more than balanced such law-breaking as he had committed.

When all hope had gone, he sent for the chaplain to ask what became of the soul after death, at which we are told the reverend gentleman begged him to "turn his thoughts to matters of more importance." Later he asked whether suicide was a crime, and after some conversation said he was convinced it was a dreadful sin. All the same, in dead of night before his execution he drank a large amount of laudanum. The amount frustrated his purpose, since he became very ill but did not die. He was dazed by the drug and in a dreadful state when they carried him to the cart that was to take him to his death.

All the journey he passed between jeering throngs who pelted him with filth and rejoiced at his misery.

So they brought him to Tyburn.

So he died.

CHAPTER VIII

SIXTEEN STRING JACK

THE HIGHWAYMAN WITH A NICE TASTE IN RIBBONS

BOSWELL: "Does not Gray's poetry, Sir, tower above the common mark?"

JOHNSON: "Yes, Sir, but we must attend to the difference between what men in general cannot do if they would and what every man may do if he would. Sixteen String Jack towered above the common mark . . ."

Boswell remarking to Johnson that he had witnessed many executions at Tyburn, but had never seen one of the criminals exhibit any fear of death:

"They have never thought at all," said the doctor.

Boswell's Life of Johnson.

MY lord judge, sitting in state at the Old Bailey, lifted the nosegay of flowers and sweet herbs placed on his desk that he might smell their fragrance and so protect himself against the infection of gaol fever, or the very unpleasant smells which accompanied the prisoners brought to the dock out of the unspeakably loathsome cells in which they had been herded.

The names of three prisoners had been called, all men, Clayton, Shepherd and John Rann, charged with robbing Mr. William Somers upon

the King's Highway. The usher shouted the names and into the dock came Clayton and Shepherd, hangdog-looking ruffians we may be sure though no special description of them has come down to us.

There was an instant's breathing space, then with due regard to dramatic effect there swaggered in their wake a young man dressed in the gayest garments, the heavy irons which manacled hands and feet decorated with blue ribbons, on his face a smirking smile of satisfaction that he found himself the centre of all eyes.

Naturally the court stared aghast at such a spectacle, and in the dock between his two companions Jack Rann rearranged his ribbons as far as his chained hands would allow, preening himself with the certainty that all who saw must admire his most excellent taste.

Mr. William Somers went into the witness-box, but he could not identify any of the prisoners, so from lack of evidence they were discharged, only to be rearrested immediately for the same offence against a Mr. Langford. Again the charge broke down and this time the prisoners went free, Jack Rann swaggering out of the court, more than ever convinced that he was a very fine fellow indeed.

So far as is known that was his first appearance in a criminal court, and it may be said to mark

his entrance into the world of crime—his law breaking exploits occupying a very few months.

He was born a few miles from Bath, his parents wandering tinkers, and in his childhood he shared their nomad life. When he was twelve he attracted the attention of a lady of fashion who was visiting Bath to drink the waters, and she decided to take him into her service. As a helper in her stables he was brought to London but presently left to become a postboy and general helper at Brookes Mews, a well-known posting house. Afterwards he was a groom in the service of a nobleman who had a mansion in Portman Square, but always his love of fine clothes and bright colours was his leading motive, and during his stay in Portman Square he was given the name of Sixteen String Jack by which he was to go down to fame. The breeches of grooms and postboys were laced at the knee, there being eight eyelet holes on each side of the openings, and the usual method was for one string or "lace" to be used, passing to and fro across the opening to be tied at the knee in a workmanlike knot. This serviceable method would not do for Jack Rann. Instead, he had sixteen separate ribbons, each holding two of the eyelet holes together and each tied in a dainty bow. The peculiarity was so marked—

perhaps so much admired—that to his delight he became known far and wide as Sixteen String Jack.

There must have been something fascinating about the contemptible creature, since he exercised considerable influence over his companions, and whenever he appeared in court the public spread strange stories concerning his exploits. Even Dr. Johnson was under his spell to an extent, and the only portrait of Rann in existence is a wood-engraving illustrating an early edition of Boswell.

Amongst his associates, besides the two named already, were a man named Jones and a particularly foolish lad called Collier . . . or Colledge, there seems some doubt as to the spelling. This wretched boy admired his leader so much that it was his great ambition to be known as Eight String Jack by way of acknowledging the pattern he followed.

Those first two charges against Rann had been for picking pockets, but during the time he was in Newgate awaiting his first trial he saw the lavishness with which captive highwaymen flung money about, he noticed the smartness with which they dressed, the readiness of the crowd to hail them as heroes, and forthwith made up his mind that a highwayman he would be.

It was in April he had been acquitted, but on May 30th he was in the dock again, and by now he had reached the dignity of horse and pistol, for he was charged with "robbing John Devall, Esq., near the nine mile stone on Hounslow Heath." Amongst other booty was a gold watch which he gave to a girl who professed to be a milliner's apprentice, though it is doubtful if she made much money by her legitimate trade. She and Jack were lovers, if the word may be used, and with great politeness she is described in the Newgate Calendar as "Miss Eleanor Roche."

Receiving the watch, "Miss Roche" gave it to a Mrs. Catherine Smith to pawn, and thereupon Mrs. Smith carried it to Mr. Hallam, a pawnbroker, who suspecting it had not been come by honestly, caused Smith to be taken into custody, on which she gave evidence against "Miss Roche" and Jack. The latter remained in Newgate from May 30th to July, and when he appeared in the dock his dress was as amazing as before. The blue ribbons on his manacles were more in evidence than ever, and in the breast of his coat he had "a bundle of flowers almost as big as a broom."

Again he stood swaggering in the dock, basking in the limelight of notoriety, and again he was

acquitted through lack of evidence. Knowing the punishment was death, the prosecutors, being honest gentlemen, were careful to give any prisoner the benefit of the doubt.

Set free again, for a very few weeks Rann lived a life of braggadocia and bombast that would be incredible if it were not proved beyond shadow of doubt. One day, dressed in his finest, he appeared before the gallows at Tyburn where a highwayman was to die. A ring of constables kept the crowd back from the fatal tree, but by the payment of a bribe Sixteen String Jack was allowed to pass the barrier and stand close to the cart.

" It is very proper I should be a spectator on this occasion since I, myself, am a celebrated highwayman," he had the impertinence to say in explanation of his presence.

The Sunday after his appearance at the Old Bailey he went to Bagnigge Wells, the public garden near what is now King's Cross. In Harrison's *History of London* it is described as :

> " . . . a place of public entertainments . . . much frequented in the summer by the inhabitants of London. This place has long been noted for a mineral spring, but is now more particularly frequented on account of the gardens

which have been greatly improved and laid out in a most agreeable manner. On one side of the gardens is a long room which is elegantly fitted up, and round the garden are convenient little boxes for the accommodation of the company."

In the midst of the holiday crowd appeared Sixteen String Jack in a scarlet coat, tambour waistcoat, white silk stockings and laced hat, again publicly proclaiming himself " a celebrated highwayman." Some one very sensibly told him not to be a fool, some one else jeeringly declared he did not believe such a dressed-up popinjay was a highwayman at all, on which Jack became truculent. The quarrel had merged into a free fight when some of the young men picked him up and bodily flung him through one of the windows of the " long room." Apparently the window looked into the street, and thus he was expelled from the gardens.

His finery in rags, Jack picked himself up, and shaking his fist at his tormentors who were grinning through the broken window, protested loudly at the " vile affront which had been offered to a gentleman of his character."

At Barnet races he made another public appearance, dressed " in most elegant sporting style, his waistcoat being blue satin bound with

silver," and as he went peacocking along, ever proclaiming what a fine fellow he was, crowds of eager people followed, many laughing at his folly, though others were impressed. He saw himself as king of a little court, and in that hour of triumph, such as it was, found reward for all besides.

He must have been committing robberies all this time, otherwise how could he have found money to gratify his lust for finery, unless indeed his milliner friend helped? About that there is a doubt, but at least no deed of atrocity, no bloodthirsty act, nor even one of greed can be brought against him, and it is quite possible he was not guilty of most of the charges on which he had stood in the dock, though some of the evidence seems clear. On September 26th he committed a highway robbery which was brought home beyond doubt, and with that his career of crime ended. If the six weeks between May 30th and the July assizes which he spent in prison are deducted, he was in the limelight for less than three months in all.

On this September day he and silly William Collier, who wanted to be Eight String Jack, went to the Uxbridge Road to wait by the wayside till they should come across a likely victim. Presently they saw a portly gentleman in clerical

dress, riding a plump and leisurely nag. The gentleman was the Rev. Dr. William Bell, chaplain to Princess Amelia, daughter of George III.

The reverend gentleman was in no hurry, he had been visiting friends at Ealing and as it was broad daylight, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, he did not think of robbery. He passed two men on the road and afterwards stated that they struck him as being of "mean appearance," a description that probably hurt Sixteen String Jack more than all the punishments the law could inflict. Mr. Bell added he gave no further thought to them till he heard the beats of their horses' hoofs coming in pursuit of his ambling pony, when one, whom he definitely identified as Rann, drew his horse across the road and made the familiar demand: "Your money or your life," adding, "if you don't give it quickly I will blow your brains out."

The doctor made no resistance and gave up his possessions with quite good grace, because they happened to be very few. In money he was carrying only one shilling and sixpence, and he had no valuables excepting a watch in a tortoiseshell case.

With their booty, such as it was, the robbers decamped, and on reaching his home Jack Rann

followed the same procedure as before. He gave the watch to "Miss Roche" to pawn.

The woman, Catherine Smith, not being available, "Miss Roche" called in the help of her servant, a girl named Christina Stewart, who was bidden to go to the shop of Mr. Cordy the pawnbroker in Oxford Road—now Oxford Street—to see what Mr. Cordy would lend.

Mr. Cordy acted exactly as Mr. Hallam had done. Both were respectable tradesman, which is a proof Jack and his inamorata were bungling amateurs in crime. Had they been professional criminals they would have known a safe market for their stolen goods. As it was, Mr. Cordy detained Christina while he sent a messenger to communicate with a Mr. Grignon, a watchmaker in Russell Street, Covent Garden, whose name was engraved on the watch. Turning up his books Mr. Grignon proved that the watch had been sold to the Rev. Dr. Bell who was communicated with in turn, and so the chain was complete.

In the result Rann, Collier, Christina Stewart and "Miss Roche" were arrested for the paltry theft.

Whatever the others may have felt, Rann was certain he would be set free, so devoted himself to having a good time in prison and designing new

clothes to wear for his trial. When the important day came he was resplendent in a pea-green suit, a ruffled shirt, a hat bound with silver strings, ribbons to match binding his irons, and had arranged for a supper-party at a tavern near Newgate, where he intended to entertain his admirers.

His hopes ended in despair. The case was proved and he was sentenced to death, as was Collier; but later the boy was set free, why, is not quite clear, since as it stood the law was not likely to have taken his youth into consideration. The servant, Christina Stewart, was released because she had helped to bring the crime home to the others, and "Miss Roche," still described thus politely in the Calendar, was sentenced to transportation for fourteen years.

We are told that hearing the verdict of the jury Rann attempted to smile, but the effort was a failure and the confidence which had sustained him before forsook him. However, in his prison he had that supper-party after all, though in his cell instead of at the inn, and another party on the night of Sunday, October 23rd, when he and seven girls made merry in the condemned cell.

He was not executed until November 30th, by which time he had begun to realise his position.

When the day came he enjoyed another small triumph, for crowds lined the entire road from Newgate to Tyburn. Smith, the engraver, has left it on record that in his boyhood he remembered his father's friend, Nollekens, the sculptor, taking him by the hand and leading him to the corner of John Street to watch Sixteen String Jack go by to die.

Arrived at Tyburn the weakminded creature showed more courage than might have been expected, for "he behaved with decent resignation and surveyed the gallows with the eye of confidence."

CHAPTER IX

CAPTAIN RICHARD DUDLEY

SAILOR, SOLDIER, GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE, DEBTOR, THIEF

> Scarce can our fields, such crowds at Tyburn die,
> With hemp the gallows and the fleet supply.
>
> *Dr. Johnson.*

ADMIRAL RICHARD CARTER stood upon his quarter-deck glowering at the young officer who had dared to slight the majesty of naval discipline. Fine sailor as Carter was—and we know how splendidly he died in the moment of victory at the battle of La Hogue—he was a martinet of the sternest type, as indeed all naval officers of high rank were in the seventeenth century.

The man who stood before him, manacled, guarded by seamen, was young Richard Dudley who had joined his ship as a midshipman a few years before and had distinguished himself so highly that he had received considerable promotion. Now the voyage was over, the ship lay at anchor in Portsmouth Harbour, and the distribution of prize-money and other rewards

had become known. For some reason Admiral Carter had taken a dislike to young Dudley and had treated him with injustice. Dudley found himself passed over in the matter of prize-money and promotion though he had deserved both, and in his fury he had attacked the admiral on his own quarter-deck. Had they been at sea he would have been hanged at the yard-arm and given a short shrift, but being in home waters the admiral decided to hand him over to the town authorities, and from that quarter-deck young Dudley was dragged to the Portsmouth prison to be flung into a lonely cell and heavily ironed.

Young Dudley was the descendant of a good Northamptonshire family, his father had inherited considerable wealth and landed property, though he had met reverses of fortune before he removed to Landon where young Richard was educated at St. Paul's School. From there he went into the navy, and now he was a prisoner with irons upon his wrists. Exactly what happened no one knows, but probably, although he had been disappointed in that particular prize-money, he had plenty of funds and gaolers were open to bribery. Somehow his irons were removed, he was out of prison, and decided to go to London. On the way he had to pass the

house of Admiral Carter on the outskirts of Portsmouth, and in the dead of night he broke into that mansion and decamped carrying off a considerable amount of the admiral's property.

His biographers count this as one of his blackest crimes, but considering his grudge against the admiral it seems rather a reckless joke by a dare-devil sailor ashore. It was an act of folly, but hardly that of a criminal of the deepest dye.

Back in London he was in danger from his desertion as well as from his burglarious exploit, but his father appealed to the King, and in acknowledgment of the elder Dudley's sufferings in the Civil War, the lad was not only granted a free pardon for his escapade, but was given a commission in His Majesty's Foot Guards then ordered for active service in Tangiers—the campaign for which Nevison was conscripted with other convicts and from which he escaped.

In the army Richard Dudley proved himself a born leader and a brave man, a strict disciplinarian, yet popular with the rank and file. At the fall of Tangiers (1683) he displayed great heroism, and returning to London married a lady of good family and considerable fortune, apparently giving up all thought of a military career in favour of domesticity.

He and his young wife lived in a very " genteel

and honourable manner," but he "delighted in company," and unfortunately was induced to stand surety for one of his friends who was unable to meet the debt when it fell due. Richard Dudley had to pay or go to prison, and payment was impossible. Arrest followed.

Johnson says that when the officers arrived at his house he and his friends resisted, and that in the mêlée one of the bailiffs was killed, but the crime was never laid to Dudley's account in any court of law, so probably the story is a picturesque fiction with no foundation in fact.

He considered himself the victim of gross injustice, and a complete change in his character began from the time of his removal to the debtors' prison. He entered it a dashing, open-handed, good fellow—he left it an embittered man pledged to carry on a desperate war against society. Brooding over his wrongs, real or fancied, had warped his nature, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the laws regarding the imprisonment of debtors were bad enough to embitter any thoughtful, enlightened man, let that be remembered in his favour.

The debtor was arrested and—if he were likely to have influential friends, besides being possessed of a certain amount of money—he was taken to a Sponging House, a dingy place that

might be described as an establishment let out in furnished apartments of which the proprietor was responsible for the safe keeping of his prisoners. Once a debtor was within these sinks of blackmail and vice and robbery he had no hope of escape. Even if one debtor were paid, another was found to lodge a further complaint against him. All lodgers were profitable to a Sponging House keeper for a time, and when their money failed they were dragged to the greater misery of a debtors' prison, where their sole means of support was the charity of the public.

In a Sponging House a prisoner could occupy as many rooms as he cared to pay for—the rents being exorbitant—and might be accompanied by his wife and extend hospitality to friends, only for each and any privilege he had to pay, and every article of food or drink he consumed was supplied at inflated charges. Where the particular Sponging House to which Dudley was taken was situated we do not know; probably it was in Quality Court, that turning which remains off Chancery Lane, now lined by highly respectable offices. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was the centre of the Sponging Houses, obtaining its name from the fact that the debtors detained there were "the quality."

Johnson deals fully with Dudley's views on the subject :

" He deemed a sergeant in England or what is known in Scotland by the name of Messenger (*i.e.* the official who made arrests for debt) as one who is determined to strip every person who comes under his power of all he possibly can. First to seize him for the debt, then ' out of compassion and civility ' conducts him to a tavern, where, being entertained at the debtor's expense, he employs all his ingenuity to learn the name of the next creditor who can harass—so that he may soon have him in his hands again. While Dudley esteemed the rest of the inquisitorial, searching, apprehending and persecuting band, as excelling each other in active oppression or cunning villainy, he deemed a gaoler as a creature mistaken in the making, for he should have been a tiger. But the shape being thought too terrible, it is covered and he wears the visage of a man, yet retains a tiger's fierceness. One who hangs up his conscience and his shackles together, which are made very near of the same metal, only that the former is harder than the latter and has one quality superior to iron that it never melts. That he, without remorse, distils money from poor men's

tears and grows fat upon their curses. That if his fees and the life of a fellow creature were both placed in the scales, he would cast away the latter to secure the former. And in short, that as his ears are stopped to the cries of his fellow creatures and shows them no mercy [*sic*] he may expect that his Maker will be deaf to his cries and show him no mercy."

There is ample evidence that the terrible indictment was justified to the full.

In 1679, practically the time at which Dudley suffered, there was published a little book entitled *The Cries of the Oppressed*, written, or published, by Moses Pitt, who was a speculative builder amongst other things, and was brought to bankruptcy because he went to much expense to " fill up all the low grounds in that part of St. James's Park between the birdcages and that range of buildings in Duke Street whose back front is towards the said park "—we know Bird Cage Walk to-day, the walk marking the site of the " birdcages " which contained the pets of Charles II. Pitt was committed to prison, and on his release made enquiries of the treatment debtors received in other prisons. The result was what he calls :

" A small book as full of tragedies as pages ;

they not acted in foreign nations among Turks and Infidels, but in this our own country, by our own countrymen and relations to each other—not acted time out of mind by men many thousand or hundred years agone, but now at this very day, by men now living in prosperity, wealth and grandeur. They are such tragedies as no age or country can parallel."

The last statement may be doubted, but the stories are terrible enough to make the exaggeration forgivable. There is the account of a Liverpool doctor who, having no money was given no food in his prison, and actually ate the rats and mice he caught with the aid of a friendly cat—of a man at Lincoln who begged that a purse which had been taken from him might be restored, on which the gaoler dragged him round the yard with such violence that " he became not so well in his intellect as formerly."

Six years later Dance, the son of the architect of Buckingham Palace, was in the Fleet and published a poem which optimistically he entitled *Humours of the Fleet*—humours are difficult to find among the sordid horrors of the work.

He described the better side of the prison first, that which contained the debtors who could

pay for their food and lodging and who spent the time in riotous foolishness.

> Some, of low taste, ring handbells, direful noise!
> And interrupt their fellows' harmless joys;
> Disputes more noisy now a quarrel breeds,
> And fools on both sides fall to Loggerheads:
> Till wearied with persuasive thumps and blows,
> They drink to friends as if they ne'er were foes.

Also he describes the sums which have to be paid before even this very comparative comfort can be reached:

> For ere its threefold gates it will unfold,
> The destined captive must produce some gold;
> Four guineas at the least for different fees,
> Completes your *Habeas* and commands the keys;
> But that deficient you'll but ill betide,
> Lie in the hall, perhaps, or the Common Side.

The Common Side was the part devoted to the poorest prisoners amid miseries which are indescribable. Another horrible aspect of the prison life was that the older prisoners, men—and women—hardened by the lives they led, invariably fastened on a new-comer, hailing him as a "chum" (in this connection the word was invented), offering to show him all the ways of the place, which meant that these fellow-prisoners were as great thieves as the gaolers. Of their personal habits an idea can be gathered from Dance, who expressed himself disgusted by the

appearance of the prisoner who wanted to be his chum, on which the gaoler made excuses, suggesting the author was too particular and adding that the prisoner :

> " . . . is now in dishabille and dirt,
> He shaves to-morrow, though, and turns his shirt."

Into such surroundings they flung hot-headed, free-handed Richard Dudley, to remain in prison a considerable time, and, as there is no later mention of her, it would seem he lost his young wife during his incarceration. Perhaps, poor girl, she shared his imprisonment and died in the midst of the sordid horrors—it was a fate which befell the wives of many debtors. At last he was set free, penniless, friendless, a desperate man who had " vanquished every virtuous feeling," as Johnson puts it, and who, making a trade of crime, " robbed on the highway, broke into houses, picked pockets or performed any act of violence or cunning by which he could procure money."

True to the traditions of the highwaymen, he seems to have made it a rule to rob only the rich, making a special point of waylaying lawyers, while, as was the case with all of his kidney, he was generous to the poor. Without wishing to detract from their good deeds or be unjust to their memories, it may be pointed out that selfish motives might underlie this seeming chivalry.

They robbed the rich because no other game was worth the risk, they flung money to the poor, since without the assistance of sympathisers on every side they could not hope to escape the law even as long as they did, and the humblest friend could help.

Committing a burglary Dudley was arrested and took his place in the dock at the Old Bailey. There was no doubt of his guilt and he was sentenced to death, but his friends interposed and, thanks to their influence, he received the doubtful mercy of having his sentence changed to one of transportation.

With a party of other convicts he was herded to the docks to be put on board a ship bound for Barbadoes, and thrust under hatches into one of those dark and dreadful prisons which were all "stench and lamentation," as Macaulay wrote.

Richard Dudley had been a sailor, and his familiarity with life on board ship stood him in good stead. As the ship made her way down the Thames he concerted his plans, with the result before they were in the Channel he and his comrades were ready for action.

At the time appointed—in the dead of a dark night—they freed themselves from their irons and rushed the sentry. Perhaps he was not so

taken by surprise as might appear, if any of the convicts had been able to secret valuables a bribe might have passed. In any case, the watch was overpowered and bound, the hatches were closed on the rest of the crew, and before the alarm had been well given the fugitives had tumbled over the side into one of the boats and were rowing for dear life into the night.

It was somewhere off the Isle of Wight that the mutiny occurred, and the party landed on the coast of Hampshire, then presenting many wide stretches of uninhabited marshland. Dudley, who was the leader throughout, decided it would be madness to keep together, therefore at his orders each went a separate way and none was rearrested.

Dudley turned his face northward. He was penniless and practically in rags, so his progress was slow and filled with hardship, since, as Johnson grimly says : " he begged when he had no opportunity to steal." He wanted to reach London, but wandered out of his way, since he approached the city from the west instead of the south, finding himself on the wastes of Hounslow Heath as a stormy night began to gather.

There his ill fortune changed, according to his own lights, for he saw a well-dressed farmer mounted on a heavy draught horse. Springing

from the lair amid the furze where he had been resting, Dudley forced the man to dismount and change clothes, then he mounted the horse and rode away, not very comfortable from the fact that his steed was excessively slow, and if the farmer met friends pursuit was certain.

He had not gone far, however, when he overtook a well-mounted gentleman and again made an exchange, with the result that he rode to London in safety, and falling in with friends was appointed head of a recognised gang of thieves. Later he had a fortunate capture, for robbing a Dutch colonel of his gold-laced coat and horse, he came to the discovery that the horse was remarkably clever, and had been ridden by a highwayman before, so skilful was it in leaping from the ambush to block the way of post-chaise or coach or lonely traveller, so perfectly it obeyed bit or spur, so splendid was its fleetness or strength. The name of the horse has not come down to us, which is to be regretted, it was a gallant, intelligent creature well worth remembering.

Thief and scoundrel as he was, Dudley does not appear to have been wantonly cruel. At least there is a story that having stopped a gentleman near Epsom the latter fired point-blank at the highwayman who replied. The gentleman's shots went wide, but Dudley's aim was true and his

victim was wounded in the leg, on which he bound up the wound and carried the sufferer carefully to the next village that he might receive medical attention.

In a little book published in the very early eighteenth century by an anonymous author, "Lives of Noted Highwaymen, sold at H. Fenwick's Wholesale Book Warehouse, Snow Hill," many adventures are told to the credit—or discredit—of Richard Dudley which can hardly be true. He is accused of robbing the Duke of Monmouth at Harrow-on-the-Hill, but Monmouth died within two years of that battle of Tangiers and the latter part of his life was engaged in his rebellion, or was in prison in the Tower, and eighteen months or so is an absurd time-limit in which Dudley could be expected to return from Africa, leave the army, marry, settle down, be imprisoned for debt, commit robberies, be tried, transported, make his escape and take to the road. The same work says he waylaid the Earl of Rochester, which is more probable, since Rochester was a lawyer. His lordship was accompanied by his chaplain, who began to preach to the highwayman on the enormity of his actions, on which Dudley told him to keep quiet, adding that he did not acknowledge he was committing sin. The words spoken in all

good faith on many such occasions are an interesting light on the mentality of criminals. Was there ever one who was not justified in all he did, according to his creed?

As a rule, Dudley carried on his highway robberies alone, but remained head of that gang of housebreakers over whom he exercised the same stern discipline he had shown in the army, and who worked under his directions though not absolutely with him.

Amongst his followers was a precious scoundrel named Butler, who came to the others with the story that his grandmother, a very old woman living in a little cottage in Spitalfields, was not the poor creature all believed, but possessed a store of gold. In dead of night he had heard coins clink and, creeping to the partition between the rooms, had found a crack in the crazy woodwork which revealed the old lady sitting at a table counting her store.

At once it was determined she should be robbed, and the grandson took the lead in the arrangements, leaving the door of the house unfastened that at a fixed signal his friends entered the place, and flinging a blanket over the old woman pinioned her to her chair.

Knowing they were taking the gold that was dearer to her than life, she fought violently to be

free, with the result that she fell heavily to the floor still fastened to the chair and covered by the blanket. They let her lie until they had secured the booty, then picked her up to find her dead. She had been suffocated by the blanket in which she had been enveloped.

They fled with the gold, but the crime was to lead to their undoing in a strangely dramatic way, though at first the constables and thief-takers and Bow Street runners were at a loss. There was no clue to the identity of the thieves, and the coroner and his jury could only return a verdict of murder by some person or persons unknown.

In their hiding-places the gang began to breathe freely when the blow fell.

The inquest over, the old woman was about to be carried to her grave when her grandson was led into the death-chamber to look his last on her face. He went reluctantly, but realised to refuse would have been to excite remark that might lead to further investigations.

Therefore he went, pale and trembling and seemingly overpowered by grief, which the on-lookers declared was as should be, indeed they were impressed by the proper devotion he showed.

But as he approached the coffin a change came—or seemed to come—over the dead face.

The wretched man uttered a dreadful cry and fell writhing by the coffin-side screaming the story of his guilt.

Of course he was arrested and betrayed his friends—Dudley declared he had not been present at the robbery, but he was included in the indictment and lodged in Newgate. When in the dock he proved his innocence, and was set free, while the grandson and two other men were sentenced to death and hung in chains. Johnson bears witness to the "dexterous manner in which Dudley managed his trial," or conducted his defence as we should say. As to his guilt Johnson has no doubt whatever, imputing his escape to his forensic skill and to the false-witnesses he had engaged, but it is difficult to imagine what inside information Johnson could have possessed which would justify the definite statement.

However, Richard went free and henceforward cherished a grudge against a new enemy, Captain Richardson, the Keeper of Newgate, who doubtless was no better, even granting he was no worse, than the keeper of any other prison at the time, and therefore deserved the worst that could befall him.

Captain Richardson, flying from an outbreak of gaol fever of more than usual virulence—the fever that was bred of "the nastiness caused

by the crowded state of the prison," as the Calendar puts it—went to Tunbridge Wells that he might drink the waters whose virtues had been recently discovered, and generally recuperate.

On his way back to Town he fell in with Dudley who, recognising him, "robbed him with great heartiness" and afterwards declared he had never enjoyed a robbery more.

According to Johnson there was a younger brother, Will Dudley, who joined in his adventures until the careers of both came to an end together.

One night, with four confederates, they committed a robbery somewhere near Westminster, and being pursued rode "hell for leather" down what we call Horseferry Road—in those days it deserved its name, for there being no bridge across the Thames nearer than London Bridge, a flat-bottomed ferry-boat plied across the stream between Westminster and Lambeth, taking horses and vehicles as well as foot-passengers.

Only two horses could be taken at a time, so a couple of the fugitives with their mounts were ferried over, the other four waiting on the bank. The first two were lavish in payment, and the ferrymen wearied after a long day's work. The money contented them, and they told the other four they would ferry no more that night.

A stormy altercation followed, but in the end, knowing their horses were dead beat, the fugitives made the ferryman swear to lead the animals to the nearest inn where they could be fed and watered and rested, while they made off on foot into the darkness of the marshes. This part of the bargain the ferryman kept, but on reaching the inn the ostler noted the exhaustion of the animals and guessed they had been ridden by those escaping from the law. In the inn a constable was drinking and heard what was said. Thanks to his energy a search-party was formed and the four men found hidden in the marshes. On their arrest attention was turned to the other two, the ferrymen were forced to cross the river again and in a Lambeth tavern the fugitives were arrested.

One of the six turned King's Evidence and escaped, while Captain Dudley, his brother and three accomplices were tried for their lives on eighty indictments, to all of which he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to death.

"Great intercession was made for him," but it was in vain. He had to die. On the day of execution he was brave to the last, for "he appeared pretty cheerful, but his brother lay all the time sick in the cart. The ceremonies of religion being performed, they were launched

into another world to answer for the numerous crimes of their guilty lives."

The tragedy was not ended. After the recognised interval the bodies of Richard and William Dudley were placed in coffins and carried to the house where their father lived, a widely respected man against whom no criminal charge is possible.

The sight of his dead sons was so overwhelming that he fell dead between them, and the three were buried in one grave in a city churchyard.

. . . . . .

Though the *Lives of Noted Highwaymen* gives what purports to be the story of Richard Dudley, it embodies many adventures of which he could not have been guilty. For instance, it gives what it calls Dudley's adventures in Rome, when finding England too full of enemies he fled to Italy, and very blasphemous and unpleasant those stories are, but with no possible trace of truth. By another series of errors the life of one, Edward Hinton, who was "born in London of good parents and educated at St. Paul's School," is given also, and to him is ascribed the mutiny off the Isle of Wight and the robbery of the horse on Hounslow Heath as well as the murder of Mrs. Butler at Spitalfields, for which it says Hinton suffered at Hertford—why, is not explained.

Evidently confusion has arisen between Dudley and Hinton, perhaps in the same way as Turpin and Nevison were confused, but the outstanding events of Richard Dudley's life as set down here seem well authenticated.

CHAPTER X

GALLOPING DICK

WHO ROBBED FOR LOVE OF A LADY. ALSO CONCERNING HIS RIVAL, JERRY ABERSHAW

"This morning the convicts ordered for execution were carried from Newgate to Tyburn in the following manner: George Lee (for robbing Thomas Cuddin, Esq., on the highway); Saunders Alexander and Lyon Abrahams, alias Lipe (for breaking into the house of Mr. Sandford, Baker, in Winchester Street, etc.), in a cart; Richard Baker and John Radcliffe (for counterfeiting the silver coin of this kingdom, viz. half crowns, shillings and sixpences), on a hurdle; Robert and Daniel Perreau (the former for uttering as true a forged bond for £7500 with intent to defraud Messrs. Drummond, and the latter for uttering a bond for £3500 with intent to defraud Dr. Brooks), in a mourning coach, drawn by four horses and attended by a gentleman and a clergyman. The Sheriffs preceded them in their carriages.

"At the place of execution they all behaved becoming their unhappy fate and little was said that could be heard owing to the great concourse of people present, both in carriages and on foot, thousands of whom came away without being able to get near. Hearses attended to receive the bodies of the two unfortunate brothers.

"Lee the highwayman was a handsome young fellow, dressed in a crimson suit of clothes with a gold laced hat, which he pulled off to a young woman in a hackney coach, genteelly dressed in white, in Holborn, who immediately burst into tears."

Home News as given in "The Ladies' Magazine," Jan., 1776.

YOUNG Richard Ferguson thought the world was a very pleasant place; he had come to London from a village in Hertfordshire where his father was land steward to a

wealthy squire, and the squire, taking a fancy to the lad, had paid for him to have a better education than most boys of his position, and dying had left young Richard a legacy of fifty guineas.

With that in his pocket Richard had set out to seek his fortune, and though he intended that his fifty guineas should be five hundred before long—and he meant to win his wealth by hard work and honest speculation—he saw no reason why he should not indulge in a little gaiety on this first evening in town.

He had never been to a theatre, in remote villages play-acting was looked upon as the work of the Evil One as late as the latter part of the eighteenth century, and this young Ferguson, who was to be known as Galloping Dick, was one of the last of the true highwaymen, living well within the last hundred and fifty years.

Go to a theatre he must, he decided, on this night of nights, and made up his mind to patronise the better-priced seats at Drury Lane by way of showing himself a man of wealth.

Next to him was seated a lady, young, wonderfully dressed, and very charming, and before the end of the first act he and she had entered into conversation. Whether she was accompanied or not, we are not told, probably she was since it was the era of chaperones, and

we are assured the young man believed she was a person of the highest importance and respectability.

She was graciousness itself. Posing as a young widow she told him she had an establishment of her own, and begged he would call upon her on the morrow. She gave him her address before they parted, gallant Dick bowing her into the sedan-chair in waiting.

It may have been a case of mutual misunderstanding, the lady—cold-blooded adventuress as she was—congratulating herself on having made the acquaintance of a young man of wealth who was up to see the sights of the town, while Dick was delighted at having made a conquest of one who seemed of infinitely higher social standing than himself.

However, when he presented himself at her house the next day, his wooing met with so ready a response that the chronicler tells us he "soon discovered the mistake (concerning her respectability) into which he had fallen." The discovery did not lessen his ardour, rather it increased it, and before the end of the week he was penniless. Every one of his good golden guineas had been wasted on that worthless woman.

Still he was content to worship her, though now

his money was gone she gave him scant encouragement, boldly transferring her affections to a gentleman named Jerry Abershaw, who seemed to have unlimited money with which to buy her gifts.

Naturally Dick began to envy Mr. Abershaw and to wish he could be wealthy enough to win back the so-called love he had lost with his money. Unable to tear himself from his siren and obliged to earn money to keep himself as well as to buy her such further presents as he could afford, he obtained a berth as postillion at an inn in Piccadilly noted for the excellence of its horses and the comfort of the post-chaises in its stables. Dick was an excellent horseman, he made the best of his mounts, and soon the most important of the inn's customers began to ask for him, and as might have been expected it was not long before he heard the cry "Stand and Deliver" on the Great North Road.

A highwayman had ridden up to the door of the post-chaise with his pistol in his hand, while another man—both were masked by bands of *crêpe*—kept watch at a little distance.

Dick checked the horses, and leaning his hand on the crupper looked back at the robber, not certain how to act. He knew most postillions would obey the highwaymen and remain quies-

cent during the robbery, but did not care to play the part as yet. . . .

His train of thought was checked by the sense of familiarity in the figure of the horseman at the chaise door, and the missing link in his memory was supplied. The crape which formed the mask slipped aside and the face of the robber was revealed.

"Mr. Abershaw!" cried Dick aloud in his surprise.

The masked robber by the roadside was the rival whose wealth had won the lady from him.

Hearing his name the highwayman lost his head. Without waiting to take his booty, he clapped spurs to his horse and rode back to join his comrade, while Dick took the post-chaise on its way in a very thoughtful frame of mind indeed.

Who the other robber may have been we do not know, but he and Abershaw were disturbed by the recognition and held a council of war as they rode. The more they brooded over what had happened the more disturbed they became, since Abershaw pointed out that as Dick was his rival in love there was every reason to fear that he would carry the story of what had happened to the law officers and put them on the track of the thieves.

In the end the two decided on a bold course. They would waylay Dick on his homeward ride with the horses and, greeting him as a friend, get him to join them.

This plan was carried out. Dick having driven his customers to the next posting-house where fresh horses and postillion waited, turned his own horses Londonwards and riding the one, leading the other, trotted in leisurely fashion along the road.

Half-way to London was an inn at which all postillions stopped to water their horses, and there Jerry Abershaw and his friend waited.

The highwaymen greeted Dick warmly, and leading him apart Abershaw made his proposition, offering his one-time rival a considerable sum of money as the price of his silence. Dick accepted, and when they parted he had promised to present himself at an inn in the Borough, the highwaymen's headquarters, that he might be entertained to supper.

He kept the appointment and was received by Abershaw "with every mark of attention. A sumptuous supper was served, and a large party having assembled the night was spent in boisterous hilarity."

When the gathering ended Richard Ferguson was definitely enrolled as one of the gang and

professed himself anxious to start his adventures on the High Toby at once. Other counsels prevailed, however, Abershaw and the rest deciding he would be of more use if he remained in his present employment to do as so many postboys did—betray to the thieves whenever he was engaged to drive people of wealth who would be likely to have large sums with them.

For some considerable time he carried on this treacherous existence, and for his part in the robberies received a handsome share of the results. With the first money he obtained he rushed back to the lady, but in *Remarkable Trials* it is stated, not very clearly, that she "having now discovered his situation, would not have anything more to do with him." From this it would seem she remained in ignorance of Abershaw's occupation, or perhaps she had jilted Abershaw also and their mutual disappointment drew the men together. At least, they who had been rivals became friends, and the association was unbroken until Abershaw fell into the hands of the Law.

Presently the suspicion of the people at the posting-house fell on their postillion, and to his own content Dick left his employment to become a highwayman.

Success after success was his. He seemed to

bear a charmed life, and galloped along in light-hearted recklessness, excepting for the grief occasioned by the loss of his friend and one-time rival which came about in this way.

Jerry Abershaw was drinking at *The Three Brewers*, a noted public-house in Southwark—probably the very one at which Dick was entertained to supper on the night he joined the gang—when the "peace officers" learned of his whereabouts through treachery. One of them, David Price, attached to the Union Hall in the Borough, decided to make the arrest, and set out accompanied by another officer named Bernard Turner.

Entering the house they made towards the parlour when the door of the room was opened suddenly, and Abershaw appeared on the threshold, a loaded pistol in either hand. In very plain language he bade the peace officers go back whence they came and leave him free, but they were brave men and made a gallant rush at the desperado.

At close quarters he fired both pistols with the result David Price collapsed, dying from a wound in the chest, while Turner fell unconscious, shot in the head, though afterwards he made a good recovery.

Not stopping to count the cost of what he had

done, Abershaw leaped over the prostrate men, raced to the stables, and mounting, rode off at full speed. Night found him at Croydon, and there he was arrested, so great was the hue-and-cry which his crime had aroused.

The Croydon Assizes being about to open it was decided he should be tried there, and the trial opened on July 30th, 1795, before Mr. Baron Perryn as judge. Mr. Garron was counsel for the prosecution and two well-known lawyers, Mr. Knowllys and Mr. Best, appeared for the prisoner.

Though he had been a celebrated highwayman for years, no other charge than that of the murder of David Price and of feloniously wounding Bernard Turner in the execution of their duty, was brought against him. The two lawyers made a hard fight to prove there was a flaw in the indictment for murder, and after they had argued for two hours, Mr. Baron Perryn intimated he could not decide so knotty a point, so wished it to be referred to a committee of twelve judges. Thus the more important of the two charges fell through for the present, but while the question as to whether Abershaw was guilty of murder or not was shelved, he was put on his trial for the wounding of Turner, and as that was a capital offence also, he did not benefit by what was counted a legal triumph to his counsel.

Turner was the only witness, on which Abershaw, who had been well-behaved during the proceedings hitherto, relapsed into the impudence which was one of his chief characteristics, loudly demanding if he were to be murdered on the evidence of one man.

The jury retired, and after a consultation of three minutes brought in the verdict of guilty. The judge assumed the black cap, on which the prisoner, in absolute disregard of the solemnity of the scene, put on his own hat with a mien and gesture in exact imitation of the learned judge, "observing the judge with contemptuous looks while he was passing sentence."

The trial over he was doubly handcuffed, his thighs and arms being bound in addition to his wrists, and in that state he was bundled into the hackney coach that was to carry him back to the Borough to await his execution on Kennington Common.

Finding himself thus trussed up he broke into a fierce flow of invective against all the law officers and the judge in particular, but recovered his impudent good-humour by the time London was approached. The road they traversed was down Streatham Hill, through Kennington Gate —then a turnpike, so a gate in reality—by which the gallows stood, and through Newington to

COUNTING THE SPOILS

From an original drawing by J. Mills

Southwark. When the place of execution came in sight he put his head out of the coach window and called to some of those on guard around him if they did not think he would die at "that pretty spot on Saturday."

When they had lodged him in the Clink prison, he discovered his cell had been newly whitewashed—by that time the influence of John Howard was beginning to be felt in prisons, and many of the scandals had been removed. Those whitened walls provided Abershaw with amusement. Some one brought him a bag of fine black cherries, and with these as his medium he drew a series of pictures illustrating his own career on the white surface. Whether the drawings possessed any artistic ability is a moot point, but there is no doubt they reproduced his various adventures on the road and in love with very lurid frankness.

Says *Remarkable Trials*:

> "At the place of execution he appeared entirely unconcerned. He had a flower in his mouth, his bosom was thrown open, and he kept up an incessant conversation with the persons who rode beside the cart; frequently laughing and nodding to others of his acquaintance whom he perceived among the crowd.

"He suffered August 3rd, 1795, at Kennington Common."

The exact site of the gallows where he and so many others died is occupied by the altar of St. Mark's Church at what is called Kennington Gate still.

That Dick Ferguson was deeply troubled by the loss of his friend we may believe, yet it made no difference to his way of life. Regarding him, *Remarkable Trials* may be quoted again :

"Of a bold and daring disposition he defied danger. His skill in horses was found to be of the greatest importance to him; and the headlong pace at which he would travel when in pursuit of an object or when chased, procured for him the name of Galloping Dick. Numerous were the escapes which he succeeded in making from his pursuers after he had committed robberies. In one instance, having been concerned with two others in stopping two gentlemen in the Edgeware Road, he succeeded in galloping off while his companions were secured, and upon being tried were convicted and executed.

"Nor were his successes confined to the road. In his amours he was equally bold and enterprising and equally happy. He

persuaded two married women, the wives of publicans in the Borough, to elope with him, and his intrigues were almost innumerable.

". . . He was concerned in almost every robbery which was committed in the neighbourhood of the metropolis during the period at which he was celebrated (This is an obvious exaggeration, since he carried on his career for fully six years at the least.—E.V.) . . . and his acquaintances and connections with other thieves were almost as extensive as his crimes. He was repeatedly in custody at Bow Street, and was several times tried at the Old Bailey but acquitted."

A very old lady known to me lived in her girlhood on Tooting Bec Common near London, then a very remote district. Her house is standing, and has upon its roof a bell, placed there before this old lady was born in order to give the alarm should the place be attacked by "housebreakers." This old lady remembered a lady who was older still, one who had seen the erection of that bell and who spoke of Galloping Dick as a celebrated person whose name was in everyone's mouth. Whether he was the hero of the story she told, she did not know, but she insisted if it were not Dick himself, it was one of

his gang who stopped the carriage in which she was crossing Tooting Common with a friend. They gave up their valuables, of course, but in doing so the elder lady burst into tears.

"Oh, sir," she said, "this brooch contains my dear husband's hair. May I remove that before giving you the brooch?"

"By no means, madam," was the answer. "Keep the hair and the brooch as well. It would be a mean trick to rob you of so great a treasure."

Before she could stammer her thanks he had ridden off, but when he had gone a little distance he came back, to the consternation of the ladies who were trying to recover from their fright.

"Do not be alarmed," he said, producing his pocket-book and writing in it. "It has occurred to me that you are in danger of being stopped by my friends before you reach your destination. Take this note, and if anyone molests you, let them see this and you will be safe."

With which he raised his hat with a flourish and galloped away.

An almost exactly similar story has been told of Dick Turpin in an earlier chapter, and that this one is perfectly true the writer is convinced, so probably the other is equally veracious. No doubt most of the highwaymen had such actions

o their credit ; it was these that invested them vith the glamour of romance and made their rimes more easy to forgive.

The two ladies were not molested during the est of the journey, and reached the little house vith the bell on its roof without further adven- ure. The one whose home it was—the widow vas a visitor—treasured that slip of paper for nany years, but it had been mislaid or otherwise lestroyed before she told the story of the adven- ure to the young girl who grew to be old and epeated the story to me. It was not a written nessage that had been set upon the slip, but a ough drawing of a cross or a star—the descrip- ion was vague—evidently a secret sign.

Jerry Abershaw had been dead five years when he career of Galloping Dick came to its foregone onclusion. He was concerned in a particularly laring robbery at Aylesbury, and being arrested vas identified and sentenced to death. To quote *Remarkable Trials* again :

> " Upon his discovering that all hopes of mercy were vain, he sedulously applied himself to a preparation for his approaching end, and upon the day of execution conducted himself with decent resignation. He was executed at Aylesbury in the month of April, 1800."

. . . . . .

The quotation at the head of this chapter describing a scene at Tyburn has nothing to do with Richard Ferguson, it took place twenty-four years previous to his death at Aylesbury. But its interest is great as showing the extraordinary social distinctions which were observed in the shadow of the gallows, and practically lasted till the times of our parents. Here we have the highwayman and the burglars riding together to death in a cart; the coiners, as robbers of the Exchequer, dragged to their doom through the unspeakable filth of the streets on a hurdle; while the forgers of bonds, being "gentlemen," travelled in state in their mourning coach with all the trappings of woe, accompanied by "a gentleman" and a clergyman.

The volume from which the extract is taken is the bound monthly parts of a periodical that described itself as the *Entertaining Companion of the Fair Sex, appropriated solely to their Use and Amusement.* Its contents are oddly modern in tone. Fashion notes have prominence—"Ladies' Dress for March, Stays exceeding low—Sacques without robings very low behind and falling off the shoulders—Large Hoop. . . . The Large Boot Cuff. . . . Trimming in all the fancy colours, the damson, Spanish brown and full pinks. Shoes with buckles and flat heels." A weekly

article entitled *The Matron* was written by a Mrs. Grey, who gave advice to the older women—there are letters and articles regarding love affairs ;—sentimental, very sentimental, poetry ;—a serial (*The Story of a Humble Friend written by Herself*)—with Foreign and Home News as regular features. The Foreign News was concerned with the war with America, of the Home News a sample has been given.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEER STEALERS

THEIR ADVENTURES IN WOOD, HEATH AND WILD

Mery it was in the grene forest,
Among the leves grene,
Whereas menne hunt east and west
With bowes and arrowes keen.

They were outlawed for venison
These yemen every one,
They swore them brothers upon a day
To the Englysh woods they've gone.

The Ancient Ballad of Adam Bell.

IN these days few people, unless they are landed gentry or the renters of "shoots," are inclined to look on poachers as villains of the deepest dye, while even the most inveterate game preserver would be horrified at the suggestion that shooting a few birds in the coverts or catching fish in preserved waters is a crime meriting death.

Yet to within almost the memory of living man, laws prescribing such punishments for such crimes remained on the Statute books, direct in descent from those enacted in the feudal days when the King and his barons claimed exclusive

right to every living thing that ran wild on the land.

With the growth of civilisation the laws against poachers remained in their severity, though so far from being stamped out, poaching continued to flourish, and about the beginning of the eighteenth century the woods and dales of Essex, Surrey and Hampshire were particularly infested with gangs of young men such as those with whom Dick Turpin threw in his lot for a time.

In the eighteenth century the following law was enacted and speaks for itself :

> " . . . that after the first day of June, 1723, whatever persons armed with offensive weapons and having their faces blacked, or went otherwise disguised should appear in any forest, park, or grounds, inclosed with any wall or fence, wherein deer were kept ; or any warren where hares or conies are kept ; or in any highway, heath or down ; or unlawfully hunt, kill or steal any red or fallow deer ; or rob any warren ; or steal fish out of any pond ; or maliciously break down the head of any fish pond . . . should be deemed guilty of felony without benefit of clergy, and suffer pains of death as felons so convicted."

Most of the poachers, however, were out for "the fun of the thing" primarily, though they were not above selling their deer. Landlords of lonely inns were their chief customers (to which fact it remains the law that no licensed victualler must deal in game), and carters were induced to carry venison to markets. When the poachers were arrested the carters invariably declared they had been forced to sell the deer by threats and fear of death, but, to put it mildly, those statements may be doubted.

For what purpose it is hard to discover, these poachers made it their custom to blacken their faces when they set out on their expeditions. The blackening could hardly have formed a sufficient disguise, and in the case of an arrest was practically a confession. However, the custom was accepted so generally that in course of time "The Blacks" became the popular name by which the poachers were known.

Captain Johnson quotes a letter which he says reached him from a friend, though it may have been an account of his own experience. It starts:

"Dear Sir,—You must have heard of the Waltham Blacks, a set of whimsical, merry fellows that are so mad as to run the greatest

hazards for a haunch of venison or spending a merry evening. For my part I took the stories of them for mere fables until experience taught me by the following adventure.

"My horse being lamed by a stone in his foot, I was under the necessity of putting up at a small ale house . . . the landlord received me civilly, but when I enquired if he could accommodate me all night, he answered he had no room. On which I requested him to put something on my horse's foot, and said I would sit up all night. On this he was silent, but his wife became rude, insisting I should ride away without delay, till on my putting a crown in her hand and promising another in the morning she became more accommodating. She told me there was a small room upstairs in which she would lay a clean pair of sheets, but she added she hoped I was too much of a gentleman to take notice of anything I saw passing in the house.

"This created in me much uneasiness, and I concluded I had fallen into a den of highwaymen, that I would not only be robbed but have my throat cut. Necessity, however, constrained me to submit.

". . . I heard three or four men dismount from their horses in the yard, and as they were

coming into the room where I was, I heard the landlord say, 'Indeed, brother, you need not be uneasy, I am positive the gentleman is a man of honour.'

"Another said, 'What good could our death do to a stranger? The gentleman will be happy of our company. Hang fear! I'll lead the way.'

"So said, so done; in came five so effectually disguised that, unless it were the same disguise, I should not be able to distinguish any one of them.

"Down they sat and their captain accosted me with great civility and requested me to honour them with my company at supper. Supposing that my landlord would not permit either a robbery or a murder in his house, I gradually became composed . . . I began to perceive what kind of persons they were, and was astonished that the agitation I was in had prevented my discovering sooner . . .

"The supper consisted of eighteen dishes of venison in various shapes—roasted, boiled, with broth, hashed, collops, pasties, umble pies and a large haunch in the centre larded. The table we sat at was large and twenty-one sat down to supper. Each had a bottle of claret, and the man and woman of the house

sat at the lower end of the table. A few of them had good musical voices, and the evening was spent with as great jollity as by the rakes at the King's Arms or the city apprentices at Sadler's Wells. About two the company broke up, all of them assuring me that upon any Thursday evening they would be happy to see me at supper."

More tragic is another story, told by the Newgate Calendar, and also by Johnson, concerning the Blacks who haunted the part of the New Forest which extended as far as Guildford to the north, and presented vasts tracts of lonely country and remotely wooded glades.

There was living at Guildford a highly respectable family named Kingsel—or Thingsel, the Calendar giving one spelling, Johnson the other. The eldest son, a most praiseworthy young man, quite a model for his neighbours, worked at his father's trade of shoemaking, while the second, Robert, having wild oats to sow, was in disgrace at home.

Presently Robert Kingsel made the acquaintance of a stranger who had newly come to Guildford, one James Ansel, described as a "notorious offender who in London, Portsmouth, Guildford, and many other towns had long been

employed in robbing, housebreaking and every species of depredation." Johnson adds that in associating with the Blacks as he did, Ansel "descended in the scale of vice," a doubtful statement.

Robert Kingsel and Ansel became sworn friends, they shared many a poaching adventure, finding a market for their venison through two brothers, carters of Portsmouth, named John and Edward Pink, "who were accounted honest and industrious persons before this crime." Another of their party was Henry Marshal, of whom nothing is known excepting that he was noted for his enormous size strength, and agility.

There came a night when all set out with blackened faces from Guildford town as usual, and about six in the morning met a lad of seventeen or so named Elliot, trying to do a little poaching single-handed, being anxious to catch a fawn to give "as a present to a young woman at Guildford to whom he was attached."

Seeing the blackened faces of the others he must have known what they were, but afterwards declared they told him they were gentlemen of high degree who had a right to hunt in the forest, and if he would come along with them they would see he had the fawn to give his lady-love and come to no harm.

Young Elliot went with the others to a spot called Farnham Holt, where a deer was killed, and as by this time he began to regret his share in the proceedings, he took the opportunity of running away while the four men were bending over the dead stag. His flight was his misfortune —he ran straight into a body of keepers hot on the track of the poachers and provided with fetters in case they made a capture. These irons were fixed on the unhappy lad. Helpless, he was fastened to a tree to watch what followed in speechless agony, and those bonds riveted upon him in the green glade of Farnham Holt were not removed until the morning they took him out to die at Tyburn.

The keepers rushed upon the poachers. Some of the latter were for making good their escape, but Ansel called to them to save young Elliot. It would be a shame, he said, for able-bodied men to desert a lad in time of need.

A fierce fight followed, and during its progress Marshal finding himself hard pressed used his gun against the keepers—the others had been contented with fists and sticks. Murder was done, for a keeper fell dead, with the result his friends were roused to stronger fury and carried all before them. Marshal, the actual firer of the fatal shot, was made prisoner with Robert

Kingsel, while the two Pinks escaped with Ansel.

To Guildford Castle, then the county gaol, the prisoners were taken, while the fugitives found refuge in the heart of the wood. Their high spirits were not damped, whatever their anxiety for their friends, since a night or two later they made their way to a lonely place on the Portsmouth Road, where one of the party had an assignation with a girl employed as servant at an inn in Portsmouth town, who had run away from her situation to meet her lover.

Soon after she joined them a deer was killed, on which the girl was given a knife that she might cut its throat in true hunter fashion. They mounted her on the only horse they had, with the dagger in her belt and pistols in her saddle, and thus with the men running by her side, some carrying the spoils of the chase, she rode through the forest to an inn where the Blacks were very much at home. The landlord welcomed them warmly and prepared a feast of which the chief dish was a haunch of the newly killed venison . . . it must have been appallingly tough.

Over the feast they sat, joking and laughing, a coarse company, possibly an extremely unpleasant one, yet hardly to be described as a gang of criminals.

Their merrymaking was interrupted by the appearance of a stranger, at sight of whom the girl showed alarm. He was Richard Parvin, the innkeeper at Portsmouth from whose service she had fled to take part in this frolic, and in the eighteenth century a master had every right to take his defaulting servant or apprentice back by force and administer a thrashing should he be inclined.

Poor Parvin had come in search of his servant, but he was not vindictive and seems to have been so dull a fellow he was hardly better than an idiot. At sight of the girl he was angry, but the Blacks cried that he must join their feast, on which he took his seat at the table and fell to work on the goods things, forgetting his indignation in his enjoyment.

Again all was merriment when there came another interruption.

The inn was surrounded by keepers and constables who had tracked the Blacks, and as Parvin was amongst them, they took him to prison with the rest in spite of his protestations. Only the girl escaped, how is not told, nor did she appear again, to her own shame. Her evidence might have prevented a grave miscarriage of justice.

In due time they were brought before the

magistrates, together with Richard Kingsel, Marshal and young Elliot, and committed to the forthcoming Assizes at the Old Bailey, though why the trial took place in London—as most certainly it did—is not clear. At the Sessions they all stood in the dock together and made their various attempts at defence.

Parvin could only protest his absolute innocence.

> "It was proved he was in the forest when the actions charged against the others were committed, but he said he had a maid who had left his service and that in search of her he was led across the forest to the ale house . . . He said if his finances had enabled him to bring witnesses from Berkshire [*sic*] he could have proved his innocence; but that the Mayor of Portsmouth, upon his being apprehended, had seized upon all his substance, and that his family was not only in distress but he was destitute of the means necessary to evidence his complete innocence. He persisted in maintaining his complete innocence to the last."

His story was not believed. He was the first to be sentenced to death.

Edward Elliot, the boy, was the next asked

what he had to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. Apparently feeling that his previous story of the accidental meeting with the Blacks had been of no use, he told a most extraordinary romance, declaring that when he had fallen in with them a year before they had obtained influence over him " by witchcraft spells," saying if he did not obey them he " would be turned into a beast, constrained to carry their burdens, and to live like a horse on grass and water." By way of embroidery he added that he had seen two members of the gang, suspected of desiring to turn traitor, on which they had been buried up to their chins in the ground while the rest of the Blacks changed into fierce and terrible dogs and ran round and round the buried men baying horribly. Finally, he said, the men were dug up, but were so alarmed they were loyal members of the band ever afterwards, while he added that it was because the carters knew of these dreadful practices that they were ready to carry the stolen venison to market.

Robert Kingsel and the Pinks simply replied that the evidence against them was correct, though they could not agree they had been guilty of any dreadful crime, also the Pinks told the story of the girl who had come to meet them in the wood, strongly corroborating Parvin's

protestation of his innocence and declaring he was a stranger to them.

Henry Marshal, who had fired the shot, had had "a stroke" on the day preceding his trial, and presented a pitiable appearance in the dock, being hardly conscious of what was happening. Reason and speech had been taken from him, yet in spite of his condition the judge pronounced sentence.

James Ansel, the seventh of the unhappy party, was asked if he knew of any others who were concerned in this unlawful trade, and coolly replied that he knew twenty at least, if not more, and could give their names and addresses if he were so minded. But when he was offered life and liberty in return for his information, he laughed in the faces of his interrogators and retorted he was not prepared to buy his life on such terms.

To death all were sentenced, and a few days later were taken to Tyburn, Parvin protesting his innocence, Elliot screaming with fear, Marshal—who had recovered his speech on the eve of his death—inclined to argue, protesting that though he was sorry he had killed the keeper he did not think it a crime "to stand upon his own defence." He added that he "could not see he was bound to run away and leave his companion

in danger "—language which Johnson considers "heinous" and "vicious."

The account of the execution is gruesome reading; partly because Elliot and Parvin were insensible, it is suggested they had died of fright on the way. Of the seven only Ansel "won the admiration of the crowd," going to his death with a bravado that was heroic, considering how he might have saved himself if he would have turned traitor.

CHAPTER XII

SPRING-HEELED JACK

THE UNSOLVED MYSTERY

He comes and gangs like the flap of a whirlwind or sic loik.
Redgauntlet.

STRICTLY speaking, Spring-Heeled Jack should not be included in a list of criminal adventurers since, except by very vague rumour, no actual crime was ever laid to his charge. All the same, he was so great a terror to travellers along the lonely roads of South London ninety years ago, that it would be wrong to omit mention of him here.

In Cut-Throat Lane he made his first appearance.

Has ever a thoroughfare been known by a more sinister title? No wonder it was looked upon with superstitious fear by all who lived near, or that with bated breath stories were told of how that name came to be given—stories of footpads who had lain in wait for the miser on his homeward way and cut his throat for the sake of the bag of gold he carried—stories of a jealous lover luring his faithless sweetheart to the lonely lane that he might murder her and

fall a suicide across her corpse. More than one grim happening had given baptism to Cut-Throat Lane.

All traces of the evil thoroughfare have been swept away, but less than half a century ago it remained a narrow, rather winding passage in South London leading from Clapham Common to Lavender Hill, though then it had lost the remote and rural aspect it had worn when Spring-Heeled Jack convulsed the town.

The year of 1838 was one of many excitements. In its January the Royal Exchange was burnt down, in its June the girl queen, Victoria, was crowned, and the winter months saw the Thames ice-bound by one of the greatest frosts on record, At that time those districts of Southern London. Clapham, Balham, Streatham and Tooting, now the centres of middle-class suburbia, with wide-spread commons tidied and trimmed into London's lungs by the County Council, were scattered villages around which many very large houses had sprung into being, since the merchant princes had begun to abandon the old custom of living over their business premises in the City and had built mansions in the rustic suburbs.

For miles stretched expanses of gorse-covered commons surrounded by detached houses of size and importance, each standing apart in its walled

garden, with high gates and shuttered windows. Burglaries were not uncommon, footpads were frequent, Galloping Dick's followers haunted the highways though Dick had been dead nearly forty years, while the police force, as we know it, was newly in existence. The lonely ways were filled with peril, and cautious folk seldom ventured abroad after dark without sufficient escort.

By one side of Clapham Common runs Lavender Hill, surely the most prettily named of any London street—to-day a broad thoroughfare where picture-palaces blaze, where huge shops form a noted marketing centre for all classes, along which motor-buses rush and electric trams clatter. In 1888 walled gardens and thickset hedgerows shut in Lavender Hill on the south, while the north was open ground where scattered farm lands and the lavender gardens, giving the place its name, covered the steep hill, which lost itself in the Battersea marshes, the haunt of wild duck beside the river.

Somewhere on the edge of those marshes a young woman named Mary Stevens had her home, but she was " in service " in a house on the hill, probably either at Lavender Sweep, whose name remains as that of a street, then a very handsome house, afterwards the home of Tom Taylor the editor of *Punch*, or at the large mansion

which stood opposite at the corner of Lavender Hill where it joined Falcon Lane. The lane was so called from the thatched inn, its sign swinging in an elm above a water-trough, at the other corner of the winding way. The *Falcon Hotel* stands on the same site at the corner of Falcon Road to-day.

Mary Stevens, having been visiting her people, was on her way back to her situation, and finding the hour late decided to take the short cut up Pig Lane (marked Latchmere Road) which would bring her on to the crown of Lavender Hill not far from the opening of Cut-Throat Lane.

As soon as she reached the hill-top she began to run, a drizzling rain was falling and the night was very dark. She was running her hardest as she approached Cut-Throat Lane, and saw the turnstile which barred its mouth almost abreast of her. Glancing at it, she saw its bars dimly in the faint light, with the unbroken blackness of the narrow way beyond. Save for the rattle of the raindrops and the faint sough of the wind, there was no sound except the patter of her flying steps.

Suddenly Spring-Heeled Jack appeared.

To her unspeakable horror a tall figure leaped from the darkness of the lane. It cleared the

stile with a single bound and reached her side. In her terror she would have sunk on the ground, but strong arms caught and held her prisoner. She felt a man's lips on her face, deliberately he kissed her, then with a loud laugh let her go, and leaping extraordinarily high, vanished into the night as mysteriously as he had come.

Scream after scream broke from her, and falling she lay in a paroxysm of terror across the entrance to the haunted lane. Her cries reached the ears of a man passing along the road at some distance. He gave the alarm, with the result that half a dozen strong fellows who had gathered at the *Falcon* set off up the hill, confident fresh devilry was afoot in Cut-Throat Lane.

They found the girl in the throes of hysteria, but search as they would no trace of any assailant could be discovered. After some delay they took her to her master's house and gathered in the kitchen to hear her strange story. All were ready to agree there was "something queer about it," yet looked at sanely no very great weight was attached to the recital. The girl had been alone, there were no witnesses to prove whether she had exaggerated what had occurred or had told the simple truth, but she confessed she was nervous of the dark and was particularly afraid of Cut-Throat Lane, so what more probable

than that some mischievous lad should have hidden among the shadows and sprung out to frighten her? The story of his having leaped clean over the stile could be dismissed; it was the highly coloured version of a simple incident which an hysterical woman might be expected to give. All the same, though her story was made light of, it had to be confessed Mary Stevens was a perfectly sensible, highly respectable girl, not likely to suffer from hallucinations.

Next night came an account of another alarm, and Mary Stevens was vindicated from all charge of exaggeration or invention.

A carriage returning from London was badly damaged by the horses running away in Streatham High Road, which was at no great distance from Lavender Hill, though on the other side of the common. The coachman and footman were badly injured, and the former could give no explanation of the cause of the sudden fright which had beset the horses, but the latter declared definitely the animals had bolted because some huge creature, whether man or bird or beast he could not say, had leaped from the shadows on one side of the way and springing clean across the road, which was of considerable width, had vanished over a high wall.

Plenty of people declared the footman was

crazy, but the story told by Mary Stevens was corroborated, and after that alarms came so thick and fast the scoffers were silenced, the doubters were convinced. It seemed everyone who lived near the range of commons—Clapham, Wandsworth, Tooting and Streatham—had some strange tale to tell, while every attempt at solving the mystery was vain.

An elderly lady who had been visiting a friend in Clapham village, set out to walk to her home—a short distance away—accompanied by her two young sons. She had reached the railings which shut in Clapham churchyard at the corner of the common when she remembered she had left her tambour frame, or some such adjunct of her fancywork, behind and both the boys volunteered to return for it. One messenger would have been sufficient, and it might have been wiser if the other lad had remained with his mother, but the two set off together, while the lady seated herself beside the railings to await their return. As the boys hurried back along the way they had come, in the village High Street they met a solitary pedestrian whom they described afterwards as being a tall young man, very slimly made and wearing dark clothes with a cape coat as was the fashion. His hat was pulled down over his eyes so they could not see his face.

Walking rapidly he went past them towards the church where their mother waited.

A scream came to them from the distance. They recognised her voice.

Back they rushed to find her clinging to the railings, while in the speechlessness of terror she pointed with her other hand into the darkness where the white gravestones glimmered dimly. Nothing else could be seen.

When she had somewhat recovered, in broken words she told how a black object had leapt past her, clearing the railings in a bound to disappear into the shadows.

The alarm was given, willing helpers flocked to the search with lanterns, but nothing came to light except the discovery of two deep footprints as those of a man who had alighted heavily from a height. Also the footmarks were of a curious shape, lending colour to the belief that "Jack" —so he was called already for lack of another name—had "machines" or springs attached to his shoes. Unfortunately no care was given to these marks and soon they were blotted out.

The fact that the lady's sons had met the strange man walking in the direction of the spot caused suspicion to be directed to him, especially as he did not come forward. But that clue, such as it was, led to no better result

than any other. Whether he were the mysterious being or not, the young man was never traced.

Panic set in. Again and again women and girls told how in the darkness of lane and road they were set upon by a flying figure who sometimes repeated his tactics with Mary Stevens and kissed his victims ere he let them go, though in others he contented himself by leaping clean over their heads. One or two declared they had been robbed, but of those stories no proofs could be found when closer enquiries were made. The girls had dropped coins in certain instances, being too frightened to remember that they held money in their hands, but there was nothing to say Spring-Heeled Jack was directly responsible for the loss.

As time went on the stories became more and more numerous. All over the country, not in South London alone, practical jokers, wearing cloaks and masks, leaped out of dark corners to kiss girls, and sometimes such jokers added robbery to assault, but these were imitators of the real Spring-Heeled Jack and were far behind him in the mystery with which he was connected.

In Lambeth an old woman was found strangled in an upper room, the door locked, the window

open, and of her murderer no trace remaining. Public opinion declared he was Spring-Heeled Jack. What more plain, they said? Evidently he had leaped up from the garden to that open window on the second floor and so had entered to commit his crime. The story was not convincing, there was nothing to connect the mysterious being with it, but the search redoubled, and had Spring-Heeled Jack been found he would have died upon the gallows.

A young woman was found dead in a lonely footpath. She had died of heart disease, but the rumour insisted she had seen Jack and been frightened to death by him—which is probable.

A thousand tales were afloat and all lost nothing in the telling. Plenty of people definitely swore they had seen him leap right over the roofs of large houses, that cottages and hayricks were as nothing to him, that mail coaches and post-chaises and family barouches were taken in his stride. Then, rather unaccountably, public opinion veered from thinking him a new form of highwayman and declared he was an inventor experimenting with a form of flying machine, while others maintained he was not flesh and blood but a haunting spirit born of the evil associations of Cut-Throat Lane, since from that lane he never went far and seemed to use it as

his headquarters. The ghostly theory hardly fits in with the sworn statements of the women who said they had been kissed, but the kisses might have existed in their imagination, and the Psychical Research Society has records of "elementals" who haunt scenes of crime and who —according to these investigators—behave in much the same way as did Spring-Heeled Jack.

That old lady who has been quoted in the story of Galloping Dick was confident that she had seen Spring-Heeled Jack, and here is the story I heard from her lips. It may be added that though old when she gave the account, she was a clear-headed, intellectual woman whose word could be taken, whose memory was clear.

Her home, as has been said, was on Tooting Bec Common, and not far away was a gipsy encampment in whose people she was interested. In those days the common was a favourite haunt of these nomads, and with an idea of getting rid of them a by-law had been passed that they must not remain more than twenty-four hours in a parish. Across Tooting Common ran a stream—it has been suggested it was the original "beck" which gave the place its strange name—and that stream divided two parishes. During the winter the wanderers pitched their tents beside the beck, camping on one bank one day,

moving their tents to the other side the next and afterwards returning. Thus they obeyed the letter of the law while defying its spirit, and prevented the inconvenience and discomfort of long journeys in bitter weather.

Most of the people near the common looked askance at the gipsies, but this particular lady had sympathy and gave them help. Fever broke out in their camp, and daring the infection she visited them with food and medicine. Ingratitude was never a gipsy failing, and she told how her household never suffered from pilfering nor inconvenience because the camp was near; indeed, once she lost a brooch on the common, when the gipsies searched for hours amongst the coarse grass till they found and returned it.

On a particular day she visited the camp, carrying food to a woman who lay very ill, and when she came away from the sufferer's tent—into which she had had to crawl on her hands and knees, as she would recall with amusement—a mist had sprung up and the evening was closing in.

Naturally she was anxious to reach home, so was the woman-servant who had accompanied her, but the distance was not great and half a dozen of the gipsy men formed themselves into a volunteer escort to see her safely back.

She and her maid were nearly home, the camp was some distance behind, when Spring-Heeled Jack came into view.

Out of the mist he leaped, making straight toward the two women with bounds so wide and high his identity was unmistakable. In answer to her scream the gipsy guard came up at the double, and seeing them the figure paused midway, then wheeling round went leaping off in the other direction.

Standing to watch, the lady saw him clearly in spite of the mist, as he went across the open common, jumping over good-sized furze bushes and clumps of gorse with no apparent effort, though she came to the conclusion that any greater leap would have been impossible. He was doing far more than an ordinary man could have accomplished without mechanical aid, but nothing resembling the exploits with which he was credited by rumour.

Had a good horse been near he could have been overtaken, but as it was he escaped, the mist and gathering night helping him.

According to her he was not a tall man, at least she was sure his height was less than her own, though as she was exceptionally tall for a woman that does not prove much. He wore dark clothes and seemed to have a cloak swathed

around him, and she thought he was bareheaded. The description does not tally with that of the suspicious young man who was seen in Clapham High Street.

For six weeks—and for six weeks only—Spring-Heeled Jack made nightly appearances, then his hauntings ended as suddenly and mysteriously as they had begun, and from that time to this the mystery has been unsolved.

Quite recently a writer suggested the figure may not have been human, but a kangaroo which had escaped from captivity to find hiding-places in the wooded gardens of the district, and afterwards being recaptured, its owner hushed the story up lest he should get into trouble with the authorities for keeping such a pet. At the time Australia was an almost unknown land, and though accounts of the kangaroo had reached England, many quite educated people declined to believe that such animals existed. That being the case, if one had been brought to London it would have been impossible to keep its presence a secret, and in the face of that the belated explanation may be dismissed.

Spring-Heeled Jack was never proved guilty of anything more than common assault, since the murder story may be dismissed ; therefore it seems certain he was either a practical joker

possessed of quite unusual agility, or a crazy inventor who had some form of flying machine or other mode of progression which he was eager to test.

Nothing is certain. An unsolved mystery Spring-Heeled Jack was to our great-grandparents when Queen Victoria was young, and an unsolved mystery he remains to-day.

THE END

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